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THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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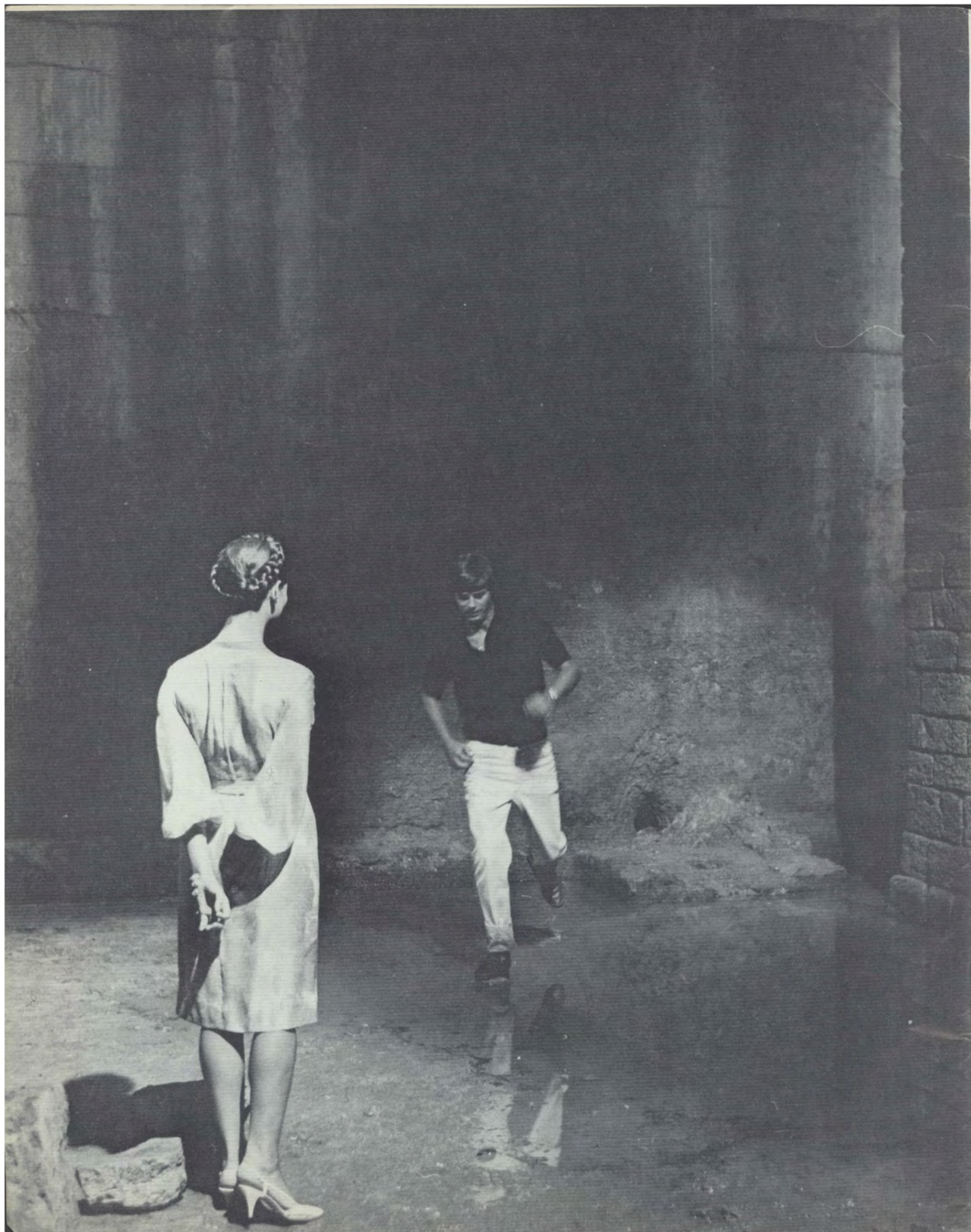
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SOME TIME DURING 1966, the National Film Theatre is going to venture from its solitary station under Waterloo Bridge. All being well, the British Film Institute's plans to extend the NFT idea (if not, at least at the outset, the full-time cinema) to places outside London seem likely to develop quite rapidly. *Outside London*, a survey prepared for the Institute by its former director, Mr. James Quinn, to be published later this month, reports on the progress made, in terms both of reconnaissance and investigation and of the governing policy. And the most interesting fact to emerge is the general acceptance, by local authorities of all kinds, of the case for an NFT branch. The old idea of the cinema as essentially a commercial enterprise, left to sink or swim at the box-office, seems to have been quietly dying. There was no need, writes Mr. Quinn, to argue the case of the cinema as an art; or its right, in principle at least, to some measure of public support.

Once such cinemas come into existence, whether operating one day a week, one week a month, or on any other basis that may be found to work in given local conditions, their future is going to depend on the availability of some form of subsidy, from either central or local sources; on the full co-operation of all the various interests involved; and, above all, on the answer to a basic question. Is there really, as is so often assumed, some fundamental difference between London and the provinces? Does the NFT flourish in London because of the number of specialised cinemas and film societies, or can it be successfully transplanted to places where the soil has been less thoroughly prepared? If the cinema as a whole has done little market research, the specialised cinema has done virtually none at all. In any case, the various NFT operations will be testing not so much an actual, pre-existent demand, which might be statistically measured, as a potential one. They will be testing the viability of an idea.

The test comes at a moment when the mood of the specialised branch of the industry seems in general to be less than buoyant. Distributors complain that there is little point in hurrying to a festival to snap up a new film when it is all too likely that it will spend the next year, unseen, on their shelves. What has happened to *The Exterminating Angel*? Why did *Baie des Anges* take so long to reach London—only to score a thundering success when it did arrive? What are Gala doing with the Kurosawa films they have stock-piled? Yet, paradoxically, part at least of the problem is a shortage of films—of, that is, top-level films which are also fashionable and commercial. There will be no new pictures this year from Truffaut or Resnais or Antonioni. And the fact remains that France and Italy still set the pace. The economic problems of these two industries, and the difficulties film-makers are experiencing in setting up projects, are reflected in the mood of specialised cinemas everywhere.

If there is some shortage of films (or, at least, the right kind of films), there is a no less serious shortage of cinemas. Specialised cinemas, being mainly small and independent, have been among the most vulnerable in the years of film industry contraction. Now that the audience decline seems to be more or less checked, it may be assumed, or at least hoped, that the small cinemas will share in the general industry policy of modernisation. There is no reason why the

specialised cinema in the provinces should suggest shabbiness, or indifferent projection standards. The fact is that it often does, and that the work of the cinema's most modern artists is being presented in some very decrepit surroundings.

The problem for the specialised exhibitor is, partly, the kind of personality he wants (or is constrained) to create for his cinema. Places like Academy One and Two in London, based on the splendid autocracy of one man's taste, are rather exceptional. One may disagree with some of Mr. Hoellering's choices, but one can never dispute his underlying principle, which is simply to show what he considers worth showing, and to communicate his own enthusiasm through his technique of presentation. So his cinemas acquire an enviable and consistent personality; and a regular audience who know that, at the very least, they will not be wasting their time.

As a more general rule, however, the specialised cinema represents an uneasy attempt to reconcile two irreconcilables. The audience for the latest nudist film, or tour of the European striptease joints, is not the audience for Godard or Antonioni. Yet there is neither enough sensationalism nor enough quality to sustain the average cinema; and the result is an unholy alliance, a policy which results in the optimistic selling of *Une Femme Mariée* as "24 Hours in the Life of an Adulteress" or the pretence that films like *Mondo Cane* are art as well as sensation. Cinemas, like dogs, get a bad name. A potential audience is lost because it would rather go without than join the sad, raincoated queues in their forever frustrated search for screen pornography.

This slightly preposterous alliance is the result, of course, of the X certificate and also of the carry-over of an attitude which holds that seeing French films (like reading French novels in the nineteenth century) is a slightly suspect activity. The demarcation line that separates the specialised cinema from the circuit houses, and the reluctance of most cinemas to combine new and old films in their programme policies, means that in practice there has been little alternative. Is there a substantial new minority audience outside London for good cinema, old and new, English-speaking and continental, presented in tolerably attractive conditions? That remains the question.

If such an audience existed in sufficiently large numbers throughout the country, one doesn't doubt that the commercial cinema would have found it out. The optimistic assumption behind the extension of the National Film Theatre idea is that it does exist, or at least can be persuaded into existence, provided that a measure of public subsidy is forthcoming. But the success of the enterprise depends not merely on local interest, or film industry co-operation, or backing from public funds, essential though all of these are, but on the kind of atmosphere that can be created.

The NFT cannot be (and of course should not be) merely another kind of specialised cinema. It is rather in the relationship of a permanent art gallery to one which puts on shows of modern paintings; it is no more in competition with the specialised cinema than the Tate Gallery, say, is in competition with the Marlborough. Films are not as easy to display as paintings; once the principle has been accepted, however, that they ought to be displayed, the rest follows. The encouraging thing is that this is the point we seem now to have arrived at.



1966 IS GOING TO BE the year that marks the return to the screen of some major French directors who have lately been out of action. René Clair is in Rumania working on *Les Fêtes Galantes*; Robert Bresson is preparing *Au Hasard, Balthazar*, his story of a donkey; and René Clément is about to liberate Paris anew with his *Paris Brûle-t-il*. Increasingly, co-production is becoming the order of the day in France. Big news is the return of Tati to the studios with a major production, and the fact that Alain Resnais should soon be filming again. And Godard, of course, goes on imperturbably putting his signature to two or three films a year . . .

Projects for Resnais

IF EVERYTHING TURNS OUT WELL, the next few months ought to find Alain Resnais hard at work. He has three projects on hand all of which have now been accepted by producers, and could well find himself shooting them more or less one after the other. All this, of course, after not having made a film for the best part of three years. The moral, he says, is that it's just as well always to have two or three subjects ready to go.

Paradoxically, it isn't *Les Aventures d'Harry Dickson*, the most publicised project and the one which has got furthest from the script point of view, which is likely to be made first. The first film ought to be *La Guerre est Finie*, on which Resnais is working with the Spanish writer Jorge Semprun, author of a novel called *Le Grand Voyage*. As usual, it's a case of mutual friends, such as Chris Marker, insisting that the two men ought to do a film together. But if Resnais has, once again, chosen to work with a novelist, this wasn't done

by design. He holds fast to his idea of the scenario that develops out of conversation, the story that writes itself and can be changed as it grows. "I can't believe that one can get much pleasure out of adapting a book. I always feel that it's like starting an engine up again, and that it's bound to seem a bit of a rehash." He goes on: "A text written a couple of years ago is something fixed, while a scene thought up the night before is living matter, a bit of raw material to be worked." He probably remembers that when he first met Marguerite Duras, the talk turned on the impossibility of making a film about the atom bomb. Out of that conversation came *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.

La Guerre est Finie retraces three days of a Spanish refugee's life in Paris. He is 43 years old; too young, therefore, to have taken part in the Spanish Civil War—hence the film's title. The action, set in the present, starts on a Sunday, and covers three days during which we are shown his difficulties in trying to reconcile what one might call his private and his public life. Yves Montand will be playing this part.

There will be no more than a thirty second evocation of the past in the film, just as in *Muriel* the only direct reference to the past came through the little film about the Algerian war. And this, in a sense, is Resnais' answer to those commentators who see all his work in terms of some cyclical journeying over the famous memory theme—something of which he himself has never been aware. In fact he hopes that this new film will not be like *Muriel*, as if each film were, for the director, a kind of criticism of his last work.

At the outset, *La Guerre est Finie* was planned as a colour film. Now it looks as though we must settle for Resnais' final decision to make it in black and white, as a result of some shift in his own point of view. It will be shot half in the studios, half on location: he loves the sense of dislocation and displacement that comes from filming in real exteriors far from Paris. "If we aren't able to begin shooting by the

first of September, the film will have to be put back for a year. It's really rather an annoying possibility, because can one make the same film a year later? At best, it's anybody's guess. Anyway, that is one of the problems of the cinema: how to link up the preparatory period with the actual shooting. I have a feeling that there is something almost biological about the rhythm in which projects develop. It always seems to be about April that things begin to crystallise, and that may be a month or two late in relation to the start of shooting. Many films get made during the summer, for the same reasons. So it's harder at that time to get the particular actors and technicians you want. Then you begin to think that if only the film had been ready in February, it might all have been so much easier . . . But it works out the same every time. I've a sense that people are exhausted by public holidays. We have somehow to round the headland of Christmas. Then, once that's out of the way, things can start up again . . ."

Resnais' second project is the only one which is independent of the seasons. Apart from one scene on the sea-shore, it could easily be filmed during the winter. Called *Je t'aime, Je t'aime*, and being written by Resnais in collaboration with Jacques Sternberg, it has rather the same point of departure as Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. Resnais' taste for science fiction is well known, and this is the story of a man projected out of time. The idea, at least, is that he should be projected for a moment into his past; but the experiment gets out of hand, he turns up somewhere else, and we follow this multi-dimensional journey and its consequences. The lines of force are those dear to the film-maker: the involvement is with time as much as space.

This isn't, however, to be a film about the landscape of science fiction. The concern is with mood and tenderness; and with Resnais we should rediscover that special tenderness which (in Truffaut's films; in Godard's *Bande à Part*) has become one of the more distinctive attitudes of the new cinema. There is no director more reticent than Resnais when it comes to talking about his scripts, so strong is his determination to tell a story that is new, that is fresh. He explains this feeling: "It's difficult enough to talk about a film at the editing stage, let alone before the end of shooting. Truffaut used a phrase I liked very much, when he said that if one knew what one was going to make of a film, then one wouldn't make it. It would just be a matter of publishing a script or writing a book. The most exciting thing about the cinema is the way that one suddenly sees the characters taking over the actors, or the actors taking over the characters; when suddenly everything is infused with a kind of freedom, and the camera begins to record things one hadn't thought of. This is what makes directing a film so attractive. Otherwise, one might just as well do it all over the telephone or with the help of sketches. I don't say that mightn't be an interesting possibility. As far as I'm concerned, though, it's the whole unpredictable element that excites me." Robert Bresson, I remember, said rather the same thing in a television interview, when he claimed that what fascinated him were the things he couldn't rationalise. Still, if there is one film-maker who leaves one with the impression that he works his material in just the way he thinks it, then it must be Bresson.

* * *

Resnais' third project, *Les Aventures d'Harry Dickson*, poses all the financial problems inescapable with major co-productions. The film, in its new version, will run 2 hours 20 minutes. "Originally, when I was invited to do a big film to set against television, the fashion was for very long, wide-screen colour spectacles. That's why it was planned for three and a half hours. At the time this draft was ready, however,

it had become apparent that some films made on this scale just weren't capturing the public. So Athos Films and Anatole Dauman asked me to take it back and do another version to get it down to '2 hours 20.' This is what happened; but it certainly isn't true, as has been rumoured, that the new version is somehow a compromised version of the first one. It's even to my mind the richer and more exciting of the two, though the angle of attack is rather different.

"The point about the original version is that it came closer to the *feuilleton* (serial story) in the classic sense. It had more of an everyday side; it took its time. This new way the whole fantastic side of the film has been stressed. I think it's going to be more dreamlike." Harry Dickson, the detective of unknown origins and almost supernatural powers, is, as the author Jean Ray conceived him, closer to Sherlock Holmes or Dick Tracy than to the classic French heroes Judex and Fantômas. Who's going to play the part? From Jean Vilar to Rock Hudson, by way of Sir Laurence Olivier, the press has come up with any number of names. But Resnais is keeping the secret: it's part of the aura of the film. Furthermore, if a name gets into print, contractual negotiations could be hampered. Resnais has known Harry Dickson since childhood, when he was an enthusiastic reader of Jean Ray. But, when a film represents a minimum budget of seven million francs, there has to be complete agreement among everyone concerned before the final decision on an actor.

To be made in colour and 70 mm., *Harry Dickson* will call for exteriors and sweeping landscapes, contrasting with close interior work. On top of this, at least half the film must be shot during fine weather, if it's to be kept down to its budget. "Some of it will be filmed in Scotland; but it may turn out that Scotland sets us technical problems, and there are bits of the Corrèze district that really look more Scottish than Scotland does itself. I will be filming another section in Belgium, which will help me to get closer to Jean Ray's own world. Some of his descriptions make one think of a certain type of Belgian house which has remained much more traditionally English-looking than the London of today. If I'd been able to make *Harry Dickson* back in 1952, I'd have done a lot more in London. I had noted all sorts of possible locations, but when I went back recently to check up, and to take another look at the streets where I had imagined the film, I found that the demolition squads had taken over. In one sense, what a blessing for the inhabitants . . . All the same, I will be filming in England."

Resnais would prefer to shoot interiors outside the studios as well, but to handle long scenes in these conditions would simply cost too much. So they will be done in the studio—whatever studio the hazards of co-production may dictate. What he holds to, however, is his desire to shoot the film in sequence, to ensure the continuity of the actor's performance. Ideally, he would choose to spend a fortnight or so with all the actors, just chatting round a table. "Even if someone has only a couple of lines, I let him read the whole script."

The designer is to be René Allio. "I'm doing the film not exactly *for* Allio, but very much *with* him. If Allio were to be killed tomorrow, then no doubt some solution could be found; but it would be very difficult for me to carry on the film without him. It's almost like having a co-director, in as much as Allio has directed *La Vieille Dame Indigne*.

"One always says to oneself that it would be a good idea to vary one's technical crew from film to film, to work with different people, then to get the first unit together again, turn and turn about. The only thing is that two or three years often go by between films, during which time we don't see one another; and it would seem a bit silly if, because of some question of principle, we didn't get together again. If I

could make a film each year, I'd certainly choose to do another with Marguerite Duras, Jean Cayrol, Robbe-Grillet. One can always begin again, but time passes. It's the same old story."

As for the perpetual condition of crisis in the cinema, Resnais' feeling is that a few years ago directors were being sustained by a general public interest in the movies. Now people talk of crises affecting the theatre, the novel, the restaurant business, football attendances, even motor-car sales. In fact, what we are really witnessing is a "crisis" (if that's the word) of public taste: a dispersal of interest. There is no longer a gradual tapering off of audience interest in the cinema: sociologists have found that enthusiasm for films simply stops at the age of about twenty-six. The thing then is to bridge the gap between the younger generation and those people who start to get interested again when they are about fifty-five—like Sylvie, that "unworthy old woman" of the *Allio* film which Resnais admires.

Will the cinema be rescued by unworthy old people . . . ?

G.J.

Alphaville: for or against

"WILL THE GODARD-ADMIRER and the Godard-hater who slumber in the breasts of all *cinéphiles* become reconciled? With *Alphaville*, in which he is faithful to his themes but not to his mannerisms, as inspired as ever but less offhand, Godard gives them their chance." So Pierre Billard wrote in *L'Express*. But to read the French press on *Alphaville* is to see that the denigrators and the partisans are still confronting each other, and the disagreements seem as passionate as they ever were.

On the one hand, there was Pierre Mazars in *Figaro*. "It takes a lot of nerve to serve up a work which contains quite such a mixture of good and bad, and to deliver in so serious a tone a message so cluttered up with naïveté and childishness." The tone certainly didn't dazzle Claude Mauriac (*Figaro Littéraire*). "His jokes, allusions and pranks," he stubbornly wrote, "don't make us smile half as much as his seriousness."

But the critic who really sent the film up was Arlette Elkaïm, Sartre's adopted daughter, writing in *Les Temps Modernes*. "Alphaville or Beta* Film?" she headlined her review. For her, it's all "a mass of pseudo-philosophical verbiage, twaddle, scenes so affected as to be embarrassing." The story hasn't, in her view, "even the substance of the worst Lemmy Caution." And "to have heard Eddie Constantine announce, in a thoughtful tone, that 'je crois aux données immédiates de la conscience', is going to remain one of life's happier memories." The partisans were also taken to task in her review: a "woolly-minded" lot, provoked by *Alphaville* to "intellectual hysteria."

Jean de Baroncelli (*Le Monde*) took a more temperate tone. "Good old Lemmy isn't bad at battering down open doors"; not to mention the film's "elementary and sometimes naïve analysis, the poverty of its script, and a general lack of originality." All the same: "This is a pure triumph of direction. In *Alphaville* we hear that individual voice which is like no other."

That is certainly the opinion of the unconditional admirers; and they weren't afraid to state it unconditionally.

For Henry Chapier, in *Combat*: "It is a film of genius which future film historians can mark with a red cross: it will make history. When a screen work runs to this level of intelligence, when its poetry is so spellbinding from the first shot to the last, objections are really no longer possible. The perfection of the *écriture* reflects a vision of the world, an admirable synthesis of our civilisation, never before attempted either in novels or in films." Two days later, Chapier devoted a second article to the film.

Writing in *Paris-Presse*, Michel Aubriant joined in: "*Alphaville* is probably Godard's masterpiece, and one of the three or four most important films made in France since the

war." And he added, as though in answer to Mlle. Elkaïm: "But since it's the job of masterpieces to come up against incomprehension, hostility and snarls, we must be prepared for some gnashing of teeth."

Jean-Louis Bory (*Arts*) cleverly compared Lemmy Caution with Oedipus answering the sphinx and Theseus chasing the Minotaur through the labyrinth. "A frightening pamphlet, tender and farcical . . . a 'dreadful' film in both senses of the term." For Bory the film is to be numbered among "those of our time which have recorded the most lucid and most personal legends, at the same time ironic and ardent."

For my own part, I've written an analysis of the film for *Cinéma 65*, and ended it as follows. "I love *Alphaville*, its creator's best film, because here for the first time Godard has discovered a framework for his obsessions and his ghosts."

Finally, let us quote Godard: "I've been a critic myself in my time. Every three days or so, I was talking about 'genius.' It's a very agreeable word to use, but it doesn't do to pay much attention to it."

According to French trade paper records, *Alphaville* has been seen by about 160,000 people during its May to August first run in various Paris cinemas. *Une Femme Mariée* and *Bande à Part*, it might be noted, attracted first-run audiences of only 70,000 (four weeks) and 42,000 (five weeks) respectively.

G.J.

Journey to Tativille

AT SAINT MAURICE, ten minutes drive from Paris, a town has grown up which you won't find on any map. Brand new cars and buses heavy with chromium are parked on a huge stretch of asphalt, flanked by 30-storey buildings in United Nations skyscraper style, topped by neon signs. Huge white arrows criss-cross the parking lots. It is all functional and impeccable; all grey and black, glass and metal. This 'cité radieuse' is Tativille and the setting for *Playtime*, the new Jacques Tati film.

For the first time in the history of French production, Tati asked Eugène Roman, his designer-architect, to construct for him this permanent set, this townscape décor, away from the studios. After the film is finished, the whole thing will be dismantled and the ground will revert to wasteland, property of the city of Paris. Meanwhile, one of the structures (named by Tati "The Strand") serves as a huge, thoroughly equipped sound stage. And so Tati, finding that to film in natural exteriors was impossible, and that to shoot interiors in the studio made things appear too cramped, has realised his dream: to have everything at hand, and contrive to set up an American-style production while at the same time safeguarding his own freedom of action. The game should be well worth the candle, since *Playtime* is scheduled for major commercial exploitation both in France and overseas. The 7 million franc budget, already somewhat overrun, indeed makes this a necessity. Nevertheless, in spite of bad weather, tests that have had to be rejected, and mock-ups destroyed by storms, Tati is still smiling. "We foresaw delays. I'm not even as far behind as we expected . . ."

Playtime is about a busload of American women tourists sightseeing in Paris—that, at least, is the situation or pretext of the film. The group includes 'a young foreigner' (the German Barbara Denecke) and of course Hulot, who finds himself mixed up in visits to offices, department stores, and board meetings. The actors are non-professional—people like Barbara Denecke, who was once Tati's neighbour, and whom he chose for her dimples and her lack of screen experience. And none of the cast—especially none of the thirty wives of American senior officers stationed at European Army Headquarters—is allowed to look at the script. From this band of more or less silent extras, Tati demands a regular attendance and some improvised dialogue in their own language. There are, however, two favoured old hands—Henri Marquet, his assistant, and Bernard Maurice, co-manager of the production—who are kept absolutely up to date with his ideas about the film's *mise en scène*, though not with the script as such. All the rest is in Tati's head, and his other collaborators have only the *découpage* to go on. And this method of working

*Apart from the obvious meaning, *bêta* also translates as doltish or imbecilic.



"PLAYTIME".

blind, and the overall confidence that goes with it, makes the film rather a special experience.

One needs to be very flexible indeed to keep up with the working methods and inventive range of someone like Tati—a *deus ex machina* standing in for a conjuror. He doesn't seem to be behind the camera, as director, or in front of it, as actor. He is everywhere. He whistles his instructions about a scene to himself; goes dancing through the movements; mimes all the parts. Then suddenly he is there: whisked as though by magic to the centre of the set, to the precise spot where Hulot, in his putty-coloured outfit and striped socks, is to resume his famous walk and his diffident air. The dividing line between real life and screen comedy seems very thin.

Tati, moreover, denies that he is a comic actor. "I'm the opposite of a Chaplin or a Keaton. In the old days, the comic used to come on and say 'I am the funny man in this film. I know how to dance, sing, juggle, do the lot.' But Hulot... he's life. He doesn't need gags. He only has to walk... through the office blocks, round the big stores. He's just a man. Architecture is now standardised and international: it's the freedom of the individual within this fabric that I'm concerned about. For me it's people that count: a little old man of 86, an industrialist who has never done any film work but is going to be terrific; a German whom I've chosen because he looks like a dud penny; an electronics expert with a little moustache who plays a man who sells luminous brooms... I haven't changed anything about the American ladies. They are just wearing their own things; and that's what I wanted. All the cherries, the pink and mauve petals of their hats, the straw boaters with the velvet ribbons, the *cloches* of yellow daisies—these are all the things they buy at the PX.

"People are surprised by the grey tones I use, especially in Eastman Colour. But, you know, the world *is* grey, and one can't inflict on the spectator a colour other than the one he really knows—like the red of a 'No Entry' sign, or the green

of a traffic light. When I showed the staff at the Orly labs some black and white prints of colour tests, they weren't able to rediscover what the actual colours were. As for 70 mm., I consider it indispensable for comedy. Look at a man in an office—just there, not doing anything. One sees him much better in 70 mm. When I took *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* over to the States, I really felt sorry that I'd made the film for a standard screen. I would have liked to have had the waves on one side, and the hotel in the middle; and the 4-track sound, with Hulot's little musical theme... It would have been wonderful. I want to explore the opportunities offered by the big screen in a way that hasn't yet been done: to give the image back its full value. One ought to base one's opinion on what one sees, not what one has to guess at. I'm making the maximum use of localised sound (stereophonic sound), and using musical leit motifs as punctuation.

"Why *Playtime*? I wanted to call my film *La Récréation*, but that title had been taken. And anyhow, now that in France we are pulling up in 'parkings,' eating in 'snacks,' doing our shopping in 'drugstores'—why not *Playtime*? But I'm using this idea of recreation with a double meaning. First, of course, recreation for the audience. The other thing is that, all over the world, people are now living in surroundings which make everything more comfortable for them—work, home life, holidays. This greater ease makes for more efficiency. The trouble is, though, that the top people seem to have forgotten to leave room for adjustment and for spare time. My feeling, though, is that Frenchmen always know how to adapt their surroundings to their attitudes, to the whole cheeky, casual side of their personalities. At the outset they may seem to be taking everything very seriously, but gradually temperament has a way of taking over. I want to show that in France there always has to be humour... And I'd like to think that in Tokyo or in Hamburg someone else may one day be doing the same sort of thing..."

C.C.



ANGUISH: ALPHAVILLE

Richard Roud

LEMMY CAUTION : 'Never forget that Revenger and Reporter begin with the same letter.'

IT IS SEVENTEEN MINUTES past midnight, Oceanic Time; having driven all night through intersidereal space, secret agent Lemmy Caution—disguised as Ivan Johnson, reporter for Figaro-Pravda—arrives in the suburbs of Alphaville. The road is empty, the night grey; Lemmy is alone, with only a revolver in the glove compartment.

* * *

Thus begins *Alphaville*, or a *Strange Adventure of Lemmy Caution*. Another title Godard wanted to use was "Tarzan versus I.B.M.," and the first time I saw *Alphaville* it was the pop art aspect of the film that struck me most.

Of course, Godard, like Marker and Resnais, had been intrigued by comic strips for many years before the term pop art existed. Comic strips seem to represent many things for Godard: first, a source book for the contemporary collective subconscious; secondly, a dramatic framework derived from modern myth—in much the same way as Joyce used the Ulysses myth; thirdly, a reaction against the subtleties of the psychological novel; finally the attraction of comic strip narrative with its sudden shifting of scene, its freedom of narration, its economy.

The plot of *Alphaville* is pure comic strip; Caution (Eddie Constantine) has been sent to Alphaville, city of the future, to bring back or kill Professor von Braun,

architect of this capital of computers. Three agents have already failed: Dick Tracy, Flash Gordon, and Henri Dickson. Caution eventually succeeds in his mission, even managing to carry off Natacha von Braun (Anna Karina), to whom he succeeds in teaching the meaning of love. The Robot has been redeemed.

Just like a Lichtenstein painting ("Oh, Brad, (gulp) it should have been that way"), the dialogue often echoes the balloons: "Let this serve as a warning to all those who try to . . ." etc. Characterisation, too, has been reduced to a minimum. The musical score, by Paul Misraki, is extremely effective as used by Godard, but in itself it is (intentionally) the nearest he could get to the Max Steiner of the 1930s. Furthermore, Godard uses all the typographical symbols beloved of pop artists—arrows, buttons, neon lights—all the signposts of modern life.

But *Alphaville* doesn't look like a comic strip, and this is where Godard diverges from the true pop artist, who has been defined as "a man who offers a coincidence of style and subject, one who represents mass-produced images and objects in a style which is also based upon the visual vocabulary of mass production." In other words, the pop artist not only likes the fact of his commonplace objects, but more important, exults in their commonplace look. Godard resembles much more pop fringe figures like Larry Rivers and Rauschenberg

who, although fascinated by pop imagery, translate it into a non-pop style.

The second time I saw *Alphaville*, it was precisely the great refinement and plastic beauty of its style that impressed me. Like the volume of Eluard poems which the dying Henri Dickson (Akim Tamiroff) presses into Lemmy's hand, *Alphaville* is the Capital of Pain (*Capitale de la Douleur*), and the visual style of the film is painful, menacing, anxiety-ridden. *Alphaville* is Paris. The swimming pool where the intractable citizens are machine-gunned and finished off by knife-wielding girls in bikinis is actually on the outskirts of Paris. The new Electricity Board building is one of the computer centres; the hotel where Lemmy stays looks to me like the *Continental* (home of the Gestapo during the Occupation). The problem was to film Paris to make it look like the city of Alpha 60, the city whose inhabitants have become the slaves of electronic probabilities, where tranquillisers come with every hotel room, and logic and the eternal present reign.

On the other hand, there was no real problem, for Paris has always been for Godard the Capital of Pain, and his style has always been anguish-ridden. Without trick shots and special effects, menace is rendered in the usual Godard/Coutard fashion: avoidance of extra lighting creates not an effect of realism, but of a city where the blackness is stronger than the occasional pools

"ALPHAVILLE": THE CORRIDORS OF POWER.



of light. Again, because he does not generally use special lighting, he can make play with reflection and shadow in a manner which cannot always be planned in advance, but which always gives the same inevitable effect of mysterious dread. One cannot be sure that individual shots in a Godard film have been planned to create a special dramatic effect, but they always contribute to the mood and general tenor of the film. For example, the glass-enclosed lift in Lemmy's hotel is the excuse for some fabulously disturbing reflection effects. These are beautiful in themselves, but I don't think they have any specific relevance at the moment we see them. On the other hand, the ambiguity of the reflections, the fact that we are often unsure of where the camera could have been placed, are of course an effective mirroring of Lemmy's *dépaysement* and fears.

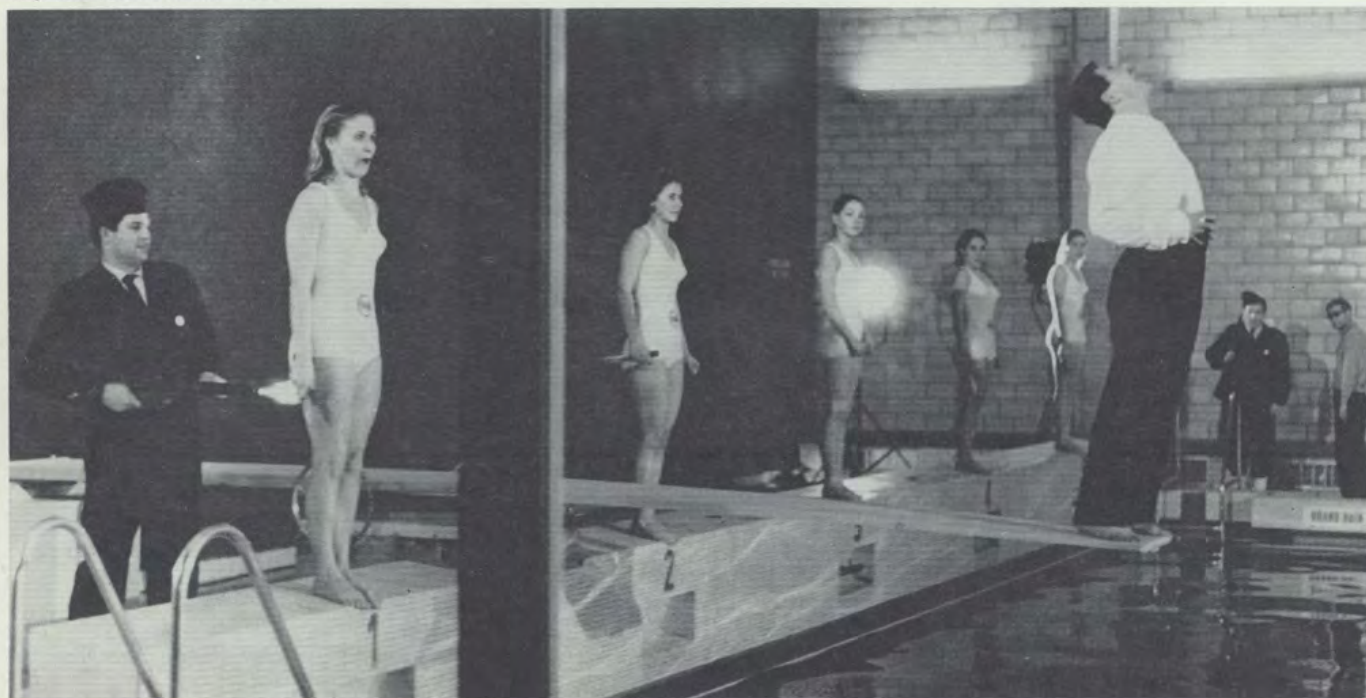
As befits a study of a totalitarian state, much of the film takes place in long bureaucratic corridors, labyrinths of power, mazes at whose centre lies death. Here again, Coutard's flat underlighting and the graininess of the image render the East Berlin effect in all its greyness and desperation. But the palaces of the government, on the other hand, are all sinister elegance, more like New York. In the same way, the northern suburbs are covered in snow and ice, while the southern suburbs are hot and steamy.

For *Alphaville* is built visually on extreme contrasts, or so I realised more fully the third time I saw it. Basically there is the contrast of the straight line and the circle. For Godard, the circle represents evil: a man must go straight ahead, says the condemned man on the diving-board. So everything in *Alphaville* that represents the tyranny of the computers is circular. Lemmy's hotel suite is built in circular form; the staircases in the government buildings are spiral; even the city itself is, like Paris, circular, and to get from one place to another one must take a circular route. The corridors may be straight, but one always ends up where one started. And of course the computers move in circles. Time, says Alpha 60, is an endless circle. Lemmy, however, maintains that all one has to do is to go straight ahead towards everything one loves, straight ahead: when one arrives at the goal, one realises that one has nevertheless looped the loop (*bouclé la boucle*).

The inhabitants of *Alphaville* even talk in circles. Whenever anyone says hello, the reply is invariable: "Very well, thank you, please." "You must never say *why*; only *because*," admonishes Natacha. Death and life are inscribed in the same hopeless circle.

Contrast is also displayed in Godard's treatment of the

LIQUIDATION IN ALPHAVILLE.



sound. The main musical theme is, as I have said, syrupy and romantic, but it never gets beyond the introductory cadence. And it is inter-cut with harsh discordant noises: the slamming of doors, the whirling of the computers, and worst of all, the electronic grating voice of Alpha 60, which is as unpleasant as it is indescribable. It would sound like a death-rattle were it not for the absolute evenness and soulless monotony of its delivery. Godard has always liked to flash brutally from a bright scene to a dark one, but this is carried to extreme proportions in *Alphaville*, where the greyness of the streets is continually contrasted with the blinding floodlights of the electronic nerve centres. Like so many lasers, they torture the brain, at the same time exercising a hypnotic fascination in their rhythmical flashing.

In describing a film as extraordinarily individual as *Alphaville*, it seems somehow an anti-climax to talk about the acting; so suffice it to say that Eddie Constantine is the perfect intergalactic private-eye, and Anna Karina seems to have gone through a second metamorphosis. Just as the difference between her performances in *Une Femme est une Femme* and *Vivre sa Vie* was incalculably startling, so she has left behind her earlier incarnation, and now stands before us, no longer the wistful little girl of *Bande à Part*, but a woman perfectly capable of rendering both the brainwashed and deadly "Seducer, second class" (her job in *Alphaville*), and also the woman who can just barely remember life before words like redbreast, autumn light, conscience, tears, and tenderness, were eradicated from the Bible/Dictionary owned by every inhabitant of *Alphaville*, new editions of which are produced daily.

It seems equally anti-climactic to point out that Godard's sense of humour is well to the fore in *Alphaville*. Some of it can't possibly come out in the subtitles, though, so perhaps it should be explained. Caution learns that while the intractable members of society are killed off, the reclaimable ones are sent to H.L.M.'s—Hôpital de la Longue Maladie: Hospitals for Long Illnesses. (H.L.M. actually means *Habitations à Loyers Modérés*: in other words, council houses.) When the fluorescent lights go on in the corridors of *Alphaville*, someone remarks, "Ah, dawn is breaking: *Le jour se lève*." Then there is the efficient method of subduing criminals: a second-class seductress is ordered to tell one of the official repertory of jokes; when the victim doubles up with laughter, he is hit over the head and taken away.

Most anti-climactic of all would be a summing up, in which I would say that for me *Alphaville* is not only Godard's best film, but one of the most important in recent years. But it is.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

CARL THEODOR DREYER

Tom Milne

BY AND LARGE (take a look at Roger Manvell's *Film*, for instance), Dreyer has been acknowledged in this country through only two films, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and *Day of Wrath*. Apologetic exhumations of *Vampyr* ("The story . . . may be found difficult to stomach"—Ebbe Neergaard in the BFI Index) did little to change the image; nor did isolated screenings at the National Film Theatre of two enchanting silent comedies, *The Parson's Widow* and *Master of the House*. By an odd coincidence (or is it?), *Jeanne d'Arc* and *Day of Wrath* are the heaviest films Dreyer ever made: solemn, serious, passionately humanitarian, indubitable masterpieces, they are exactly the sort of films which historians and critics love to crown. They are masterly—make no mistake about that—but unhappily Dreyer's elevation to cinematic sainthood through them has tended to turn him into the director whose work everyone reveres and no one bothers to see. Even in France, where reverence (principally for *Jeanne d'Arc*) runs much higher at all cultural levels than here, *Gertrud* lasted only a few days on its first run. Will it be different in Britain?

When Nana at the cinema in *Vivre sa Vie* weeps at the extract from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Dreyer's film is suddenly rescued from the clammy aura of film society memories. It is no longer a classic to be revered, but a piece of living film to be experienced; and the opportunity to view Dreyer's work as a whole (fourteen features stretching over thirty-five years) affords a startling illustration of the fact, which Godard perhaps more than any other director has realised and demonstrated, that there is no essential hiatus between silent past and sound present, no tension between outdated techniques and new discoveries, but simply the gradual accumulation of a vocabulary available for anybody who knows how to use it. Truffaut using Griffith techniques (*Tirez sur le Pianiste*) looks new wave; but Richardson indulging in new wave (*passim*) looks medieval; and Dreyer's films look neither old or new. They simply exist, having as much to

do with the present of the cinema as its past or its future.

His *The Bride of Glomdal* (1925) looks back to the heyday of the Swedish cinema, a perfect reincarnation of the great masterpieces of Stiller; *Master of the House*, made earlier in the same year, looks forward to neo-realism, doing everything the Italians did, and better. And in *Master of the House* there is a shot which illustrates perfectly the presence today of Dreyer's work. Husband and wife, after a long and quarrelsome misunderstanding, are reconciled; all we are shown is the back of the husband's head and shoulders as his wife's hands steal quietly and tenderly into frame to embrace him. It is a perfect Godard shot, and its blood brothers can be found in *Vivre sa Vie* and *Une Femme Mariée*, films which are the very essence of contemporary cinema. It looks neither innovative in Dreyer, nor derivative in Godard: a phrase has been used, re-created, and used again, still to astonish by its bold simplicity.

* * *

The difficulty in writing about Dreyer is that not only does one have to combat this half-history (neglect of some films, fulsome praise of others), but one has to question whether one may not be trying to cut the acknowledged masterpieces down to size simply in order to indulge a personal preference and give films like *The Parson's Widow*, *Mikaël*, *Master of the House* and *The Bride of Glomdal* a fair share of the limelight. To be honest, this probably is to some extent the case, but I think the process can be justified, even though it is based largely on an almost intangible difference in tone: there are the films that oppress, and those that exhilarate.

This distinction cannot simply be boiled down to films made at different periods of Dreyer's career, with different subjects or in different styles. Convenient categorisations like this just won't work, for the exhilarations include several silents (but not the last one, *Jeanne d'Arc*), his first sound film, *Vampyr*, and his latest, *Gertrud*. Moreover, despite the irregularity with which he worked (eleven years between *Vampyr* and *Day of Wrath*), and the enormous variety of



subject matter (melodrama, epic, farce, fairytale, domestic drama, high tragedy, horror), there is a remarkable consistency in Dreyer's work, both stylistically and thematically, as though he were working steadily towards a summit in *Gertrud*. Very briefly:

STYLE A slow, stately cadence, vigorous but unhurried; a marked emphasis on close-up (actual in *Jeanne d'Arc*, but elsewhere more an impression deriving from his closeness to his characters and insistence on his images); the solid presence of the decor (a preference for real locations, or failing that, sets faithfully reconstructed in every detail even when, as in *Jeanne d'Arc*, only small segments would be used in any particular scene); soft-toned lighting, playing with a range of greys rather than high contrasts (even in a film of black and white juxtapositions like *Day of Wrath*); inexperienced actors, amateurs, worn old faces, all chosen for their presence (their "mental resemblance," Dreyer has said) and ability to merge with atmosphere, setting and story, rather than for their proven acting ability.

THEME Concentration on a small, self-enclosed group—a family, a village, a victim and her judges—with the action rarely moving outside an extremely restricted area; and within the group, a lonely figure detaches itself, the object of either deliberate or unconscious cruelty.

With the exception of his apprentice works and the disastrous *Two People* (made in Sweden in 1945 and, *pace* Richard Roud's sympathetic note in **SIGHT AND SOUND**, the most un-Dreyer film he ever made), all of Dreyer's works fit, more or less loosely, the above description. But the perfect harmony between actors, setting and narrative at which his whole style is aimed, requires exquisite, hair-sprung balance if one element is not to stifle the others. To my mind, the narrative in *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Day of Wrath* and *Ordet* takes the upper hand, dictating the texture of these films so that they crush the spectator into submission by assault and battery; the second group—*The Parson's Widow*, *Mikaël*, *Master of the House*, *Bride of Glomdal*, *Vampyr*, *Gertrud*—win him through persuasion and insinuation. The difference, really, is the difference between *Quai des Brumes* and *La Chienne*: Carné pushes, Renoir doesn't, and there's no doubt today who won that battle. Tragedy needn't necessarily be all gloom from start to finish, and the rigidly controlled sombre tone of *Jeanne d'Arc* and *Day of Wrath* (*Ordet* cheats by resolving itself with a miracle) means that the outcome is a foregone conclusion, emotionally harrowing but stripped of surprises.

In any case, *Jeanne d'Arc* and *Day of Wrath* are well able to fend for themselves; the others could do with a helping hand.

* * *

Dreyer's beginnings are shadowy and unpromising. *The President* (1919), a roaring melodrama about illegitimate children and parental responsibility, full of heave-ho acting and rolling eyes, is interesting mainly as an exercise for spotting the occasional touches of primitive Dreyer: a characteristically beautiful close-up of the heroine drooping her head resignedly as she is sentenced to death; a fine sequence of a torchlight procession, ending on a shot of a forlorn heap of torches burning themselves out in the deserted street; some excellent sets, particularly the white stone ruins of an ancestral mansion; a shot of a coach silhouetted against the skyline (evoking Bergman), and another of the heroine in a moment of stress drifting past a huge pillar in the grey light of dawn (Antonioni). Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the exquisitely shot sequence of a lovers' idyll on a lake, with the famous series of images—boat drifting, fish swimming in the translucent water, lovers kissing—often cited as proof that Dreyer can film erotically: but although there is a superbly suggestive sequence in *Mikaël*, involving a nude painting and swinging lamp when Mikaël and the Princess first meet, this

sort of symbolism is alien to Dreyer, for whom love is evoked by the emotional charge latent in a gesture or a glance.

Leaves from Satan's Book (1920) is even less promising, a slavish imitation of *Intolerance* which lags a good deal behind the master, and doesn't even have the redeeming feature of the spectacular Belshazzar's Palace set. Dreyer, unfortunately, didn't pick the right (*True Heart Susie*) Griffith as an influence, but it didn't much matter; for somehow, miraculously, he got on the right track, went to Norway, and made *The Parson's Widow* (1920) for Svensk Filmindustri. Indisputably his first masterpiece, this enchanting film tells the story of a young parson who preaches an electrifying sermon to rout his rivals and win his first living, only to discover that he must marry the previous incumbent's widow, Dame Margaret, an ancient lady who has already buried three parson-husbands. Reluctantly he agrees, but consoles himself by persuading Dame Margaret to hire his girl-friend as a maid in the parsonage; whereupon the young lovers, frustrated by the constant vigilance of Dame Margaret, set about doing away with her, until they realise with bitter regret that they have misjudged her.

Dreyer learned his lesson well from Sjöström and Stiller. Instead of elaborately fussy studio sets, there is the air and liberty of the Norwegian landscape, and placid oaken interiors drawn from an authentic museum village near Lillehammer; instead of registering grand and restless poses, the camera focuses on tiny details, anchoring itself on the majestic immobility of the 77-year-old Hildur Carlberg, who plays Dame Margaret. But the real surprise of the film is that Dreyer should suddenly have developed so complete a mastery of moods, switching without the slightest hint of grinding gears from the coarse farce of the opening to the tranquil melancholy of the end. In many ways the film is one of Dreyer's most subtle expositions of his favourite theme of loneliness, for it is only gradually that one begins to consider Dame Margaret as a human being at all, rather than as a tiresome haridan who has long outlived her welcome.

The opening sequences, rich in inventive detail, set one firmly on the side of the young parson, Sofren, as he galvanises the congregation into attention after one skinny rival has droned them to sleep, and the fat one sends them into fits of hysterical laughter (Sofren has tucked a nodding feather into his wig). The first appearance of Dame Margaret, gaunt and emaciated, is a signal for the panic-stricken rivals to leap on their horses and gallop from the village; and it seems not only inevitable but right that Sofren should smuggle his charming Kari into the parsonage by pretending that she is his sister. Frustration follows: Sofren steals up on Kari in the garden, cooly seizes her hand through the loom at which she is working, only to find a shocked old maidservant in Kari's place; he makes a stealthy nocturnal excursion to her bed, but Dame Margaret has thoughtfully made Kari and the same old maid change places. So the plans to frighten Dame Margaret to death, or make her fall downstairs (Kari breaks her leg instead), begin to take shape.

It is hereabouts, almost imperceptibly, that the perspective begins to change. In a superbly funny sequence in which Sofren pettishly tries to assert his rights as master of the house, Dame Margaret calls in her brutish gardener to shake Sofren by the scruff of the neck, and smiles secretly at his discomfiture. Gradually, as she becomes aware of what is going on, one begins to discover her deeply protective attitude to the young couple; and as she bestows her blessing on Sofren and Kari, now bitterly ashamed of their cruelty, her face is transformed by radiant joy as she recalls the memory of happiness in her own first marriage. Then, in one of the most tender scenes in all of Dreyer's films, Dame Margaret takes leave of the life which she knows is now behind her: slowly, and with infinite regret, she takes a last walk round her farm, rests for a moment in the sun, gently caresses a wondering horse, and lies down in bed to die. The sequence is not easy to cap, but Dreyer does it with a superb last shot of the young couple in which Kari, now married and dressed as the parson's wife, looks exactly like Dame Margaret come to life again.

After a temporary setback with *Love One Another* (1921), which marks a return to the style of his first films, though

EXTERIOR: "ONCE UPON A TIME". INTERIOR: "MIKAEL".

directed with much more skill and assurance, Dreyer found a new sophistication in *Mikaël*, made in Germany in 1924. In between times he had made *Once Upon a Time* (1922), a part fairy- and part folk-tale about a bored princess and a handsome stranger, which is impossible to judge as it now exists only as a fragment. From the rather thin charm of its humour, it would seem that Dreyer was much more at home with the robustness of *The Parson's Widow*, but the film remains remarkable for the new, rich textures of Georges Schneevoigt's photography. Schneevoigt, who previously collaborated on *Leaves from Satan's Book* and *The Parson's Widow*, gave Dreyer conventional stage lighting in the first, and that ravishing Swedish clarity in the second; in *Once Upon a Time*, subtle half-tones begin to creep in, especially in the forest scenes, where the drifting smoke and shafts of sunlight driving through the trees give an air of grey, enchanted luminosity. The influence of German expressionism is already evident, and in *Mikaël*, where he had the services of Karl Freund as cameraman (Rudolph Maté for the exteriors), it is carried even further.

* * *

Based on a "decadent" novel by Hermann Bang about an elderly painter, Zoret, who adores the young pupil whom he has adopted first as his model and then as his son, *Mikaël* again takes up the theme of loneliness. The fantastically elaborate *fin de siècle* sets designed by Hugo Haring for Zoret's house and studio become a dank, airless hothouse in which Zoret watches helplessly as Mikaël drifts away from his exotic love into an affair with the even more exotic Princess Zamikoff; driven to despair by the boy's unconscious cruelty, he shuts himself away as a hermit, gives up his will to live, and dies after leaving everything he owns to Mikaël. It is a tricky subject, skating perilously close to both melodrama and absurdity, but Dreyer manages to weave a rich sub-structure of genuinely deep emotion, clothed by excellent performances from his cast (Benjamin Christensen as Zoret; a very slim and youthful Walter Slezak as Mikaël; Nora Gregor as the Princess).

The meeting between Mikaël and the Princess, for instance, is as subtly complex as anything Dreyer had yet attempted. Zoret is showing the Princess round his studio, Mikaël following with a portable electric lamp which he reluctantly lifts to illuminate a huge canvas of a naked boy hanging in the corner; after a moment the Princess, surprised, turns to him and says "It's you!" Embarrassed, Mikaël looks away as the others turn back to the paintings, then smiles and playfully turns the light on her; suddenly embarrassed again, he

hurriedly turns the lamp on the painting she and Zoret are now looking at, to reveal a study of a nude boy and girl embracing; and the Princess turns to gaze thoughtfully at Mikaël. The whole sequence has a serpentine erotic suggestion to which all three characters immediately respond. The relationship between Zoret and Mikaël is treated equally explicitly: Zoret's hand resting lightly on Mikaël's shoulder, or tugging affectionately at the boy's hair when he petulantly asks why the painter refuses to sell his most valuable set of sketches; Mikaël fetching Zoret's slippers and kneeling to rub his feet into warmth before slipping them on. These are the details which turn the whole affair into a tragedy in minor key, but Dreyer cuts right through them to the heart of the matter: the tragedy is not so much that Mikaël leaves Zoret, or may never even have been aware of the older man's feelings for him, as that by his behaviour he destroys Zoret both as man and as artist. There is a key sequence in which Zoret is painting a portrait of the Princess, and is unable to capture the correct expression in the eyes. Mikaël dashes in and gaily completes the portrait—brilliantly, as Zoret is forced to admit. From that moment on, as though robbed of his talent as well as his love, Zoret begins to decay.

It is in this film that one really becomes aware for the first time of Dreyer's preoccupation with textures—with the way the material world impinges on the human beings who live apparently detached from it, with the quality of light, with the tangibility of a gesture or a glance, and the equal tangibility of objects. There is a remarkable sub-plot sequence in which two unhappy lovers (she is already married) meet at a party and stare at each other in gloomy silence across the room until someone passes round a small statuette of a woman's torso; the camera focuses on the couple as the man turns the statuette over in his hands, and the air suddenly becomes vibrantly alive with unspoken thoughts now spoken. Soon after his first meeting with the Princess, who is dining with Zoret, Mikaël returns home to find her gloves on the hall-stand, and fondles them lovingly; the chess-set which Zoret's servant brings to his master after dinner signals Mikaël's absence; the nude painting of Mikaël becomes a dark corner in Zoret's heart on which a bright lamp has been trained. There is more than mere expressionism here. In *The Parson's Widow*, Dame Margaret's farewell caress to her horse is observed from a casual distance; after *Mikaël*, the gesture is held and lovingly probed for its intrinsic texture.

* * *

By comparison with *Master of the House* (1925), however, *Mikaël* is strictly two-dimensional. This is my own personal favourite among Dreyer's films, and its golden simplicity almost defies description. Ida Frandsen (played by the enchanting Astrid Holm), married some fifteen years, is a perfect wife and mother, but her tetchy husband Victor (Johannes Meyer) finds fault with everything she does. She bears it all patiently until Victor's old nanny, unable to stand it any longer, crossly persuades her to hit back by leaving him, temporarily at least. She does so, Victor soon begins to realise the error of his ways, and they are reconciled. From this rather unpromising material, drawn from a play by Svend Rindom, Dreyer fashioned a richly detailed film which is charming, funny, and intensely moving in roughly equal proportions.

True to his new principles, Dreyer refused to use studio decor. As Ebbe Neergaard puts it, "Dreyer would have preferred to make the whole film inside a real two-roomed flat. But as this was impossible technically, a complete copy of such an apartment was built in the studio—not just a separate set for each room dotted round the studio with open sides like a doll's house, but a composite unit of four-walled rooms with doors between and gas and water and electricity laid on—everything was there." The results are immediately visible in the density of the film, where Dreyer begins, like Renoir, to shoot through an empty room to the action glimpsed beyond. The opening sequence shows Ida, helped by her daughter Karen, doing the early morning chores; as they move quietly and carefully from room to room one gradually becomes aware of three things: the geography of the flat; the immense

ASTRID HOLM IN "MASTER OF THE HOUSE".





"GERTRUD".

amount of work to be done before the day even begins; and the fact that both women are terrified in case they awaken Victor, still sleeping comfortably in bed.

In a way, this whole sequence is perfect neo-realism, the detailed observation of everyday routine of an *Umberto D*; so is the following sequence, in which Victor wakes up and starts on his series of nagging complaints about noise, money and food (she scrapes the last remaining butter off her own biscuits on to his). The difference is that the neo-realists placed the blame for their poor, unhappy people on the economic situation, whereas Dreyer's family accept the responsibility for their own failures. Dreyer, in other words, does not patronise; and although the Frandsens are poor, their quarrel is one of character, not of poverty. The economic problem is a separate one and still remains, after the reconciliation at the end of the film, to be solved.

As in *The Parson's Widow*, Dreyer's control of mood is masterly. The whole film is illuminated by a rich vein of humour, which centres mainly on the character of the ferociously devoted old nanny (a wonderfully scathing performance by Mathilde Nielsen) who finally provokes Ida into rebellion, throws Victor's neatly-ordered life into chaos, buries his newly-soled shoes in the depths of a drawer, ostentatiously hangs washing all over the place to bring home to him how different life with Ida was, and, when he at last seems to be learning his lesson, hastily changes her tender smile into a frown for his benefit. The same humour lightens the oppression of Victor's tantrums: when he stumbles furiously over a stool expressly placed in his path by nanny, the little boy sniggers gleefully from the corner where he has been languishing for some misdemeanour; when Victor becomes too overbearing, his mother slaps him hard, reducing him to the status of a chastened boy. Elsewhere, humour and emotion are inextricably intertwined, as in the scene when Ida, hearing her son's lessons—"What is a Tyrant?"—reads the text-book definition, and cannot prevent herself from crying. When Joan reaches the end of her tether and weeps in *Jeanne d'Arc*, it seems almost as if her pain were being signalled by a flourish of sympathetic trumpets; when Ida reaches the same point, it is unmarked, except by the exquisitely self-effacing gesture with which she quickly wipes away her tears. Emotion in this film wells from a deep fund of observation, from the way Ida and her daughter both reach at precisely the same moment for her suitcase when she is leaving, for instance,

or the perplexed despair with which Karen refuses to tell her father where Ida has gone.

Like the rest of the film, the process of reconciliation is so closely detailed that the ending never seems in the least arbitrary, and even stands up to an injection of lyricism. Teased and tormented by his old nanny, Victor gradually realises how much Ida is absent from his home. He grows quieter, politer, more withdrawn; when he comes in to find the living-room hung with laundry, he carefully ducks round it instead of tearing it aside as he did at the start of nanny's regime; when he looks at Karen, he sees and longs for Ida. The final sequence, when Ida returns and the two old ladies decide to play a joke on Victor by hiding Ida in a cupboard and making him stand like a bad boy in a corner of the room, unaware that she is there, might have seemed a little winsome in its charm, except that one little scene lifts the whole sequence and sends it winging off on a wave of lyricism. Karen, whom Victor has for some time been trying unsuccessfully to coax into telling him where Ida is living, opens the door and pushes in a toy duck which waddles to him with a message in its beak—"I know where Mother is." Laughing, Victor rushes to the door and tugs at it until it opens to reveal, not Karen but Ida.

* * *

This same sweep of lyricism infuses the whole of *The Bride of Glomdal* (1925), which Dreyer made in Norway and which owes a considerable debt to (but surpasses) Stiller's *Johan*. The story is even simpler than that of *Master of the House*. Tore, son of a poor farmer, loves Berit, daughter of a rich one, but she is promised to another man whom she does not love and whom she refuses to marry. Injured in a fall from her horse, and cast out by her father, Berit is cared for by Tore's parents until a reconciliation is effected; and the marriage takes place, but not before Tore has had to make a hazardous crossing of the river on horseback. From the close detail of life in a tiny apartment, Dreyer turns to log cabins tucked away in great rolling stretches of hills and valleys, and the movement of the film opens out: Berit on horseback galloping away across the fields; calm long shots down a valley of peasants dancing round a fire, with the smoke almost obscuring the lake beyond; the two wedding parties standing helplessly on opposite sides of the river, watching as Tore and his horse are swept down towards the rapids.

What distinguishes *The Bride of Glomdal* from a film like *Johan* is, once again, Dreyer's attention to texture, and the density of emotion. In one of the most perfect scenes in the film, Tore enters Berit's bedroom after she has been injured, to find her half asleep; as he very gently kisses her hand and lays his cheek on it, she awakes, and with equal tenderness begins to stroke his hair. One has only to compare this scene with a similar one in *The President* where Victorine awakes in jail to find that her father has come to save her, or even with Dame Margaret bestowing her blessing on the repentant Sofren, to sense Dreyer's new, assured authority.

It is also worth noting how, in the prelude to this scene, Dreyer carefully choreographs the movement of his actors to add weight to the feeling of loving anxiety. Tore and his mother are beside Berit's bed when the doctor arrives; Tore is sent away, and crosses in the doorway with his father bringing in the doctor's bag; as the doctor begins his examination, the mother moves to the head of the bed, watching gravely, while the father hovers discreetly near the doorway; meanwhile, Tore wanders outside, carefully waters the doctor's horse. Here, as in the final sequence, Dreyer is much more interested in the emotional undercurrents than in the obvious drama (will she, or won't she, get better?). The scenes in which Tore falls off his horse, and both are swept down to the rapids by the current, are shot realistically and excitingly enough, but it is the background detail which captures the attention: the two boats, holed by Berit's jealous ex-fiancé, drifting slowly away down stream, and later seen crashing over the rapids just before Tore reaches the danger-point; the two wedding parties, one on foot and the other on horseback, reaching the shore to find the boats gone, laughing and calling greetings to each other; Berit's father gaily sending across a riderless horse for Tore, while his mother and father sit patiently down on a log to wait; Berit sitting on her horse, gravely watching while Tore takes off his jacket and prepares to cross; the helpless anxiety as Tore is carried away; the quiet celebration as Berit finally dons her wedding crown, and the party rides joyfully away to church. *The Bride of Glomdal* may be a minor film, but it's a beauty for all that.

* * *

Then, after *Jeanne d'Arc*, came *Vampyr* (1932), arguably the greatest horror film ever made. To a casual glance the acting looks so appalling that one would be inclined to say that Dreyer was here exclusively interested in atmosphere, were it not for a weird consistency in the characterisation. All the actors (except Sybille Schmitz, who plays Leone, the sister in the process of being turned into a vampire) are amateur, and Ebbe Neergaard has pointed out how Dreyer chose a respectable old widow for the vampire, or an avuncular Polish journalist for her doctor associate, somehow finding in them the "mental resemblances" which suited them to his purpose. More than this, however, all the characters have a slightly wraith-like, dislocated presence, as though they had stepped out of a nightmare: the hero with his stooping, shambling gait, drooping eyes and air of vacant amazement; the heroine like a wax Madonna, emitting fluting, bird-like calls of distress; her ethereal father materialising like Nosferatu himself in the hero's bedroom to beg his help. If the Vampire rising from her grave to feed on Leone's blood, or the ghostly one-legged Corporal whose shadow lives independently of its owner, are creatures of some nightmare fantasy, then the others belong to the same world of dreams.

And Dreyer's great achievement (with his cameraman, Rudolph Maté) is to have realised a world where nothing, or everything, is real. The country inn where David Gray arrives on holiday complete with fishing-tackle seems real enough; as real as the old man with a scythe waiting for the ferry outside his window; as real as the angel on the inn-sign dancing in reflection in the water as he strolls along the river bank. But as he embarks upon his strange adventure, the world dissolves around him, progressing steadily from the distinctions of black and white to a pervasive greyness: the cloud of powdered plaster ground out by the mill, under which the evil doctor lies buried; the pale, enveloping mist through which David

Gray and Gisele slowly drift across the lake to safety. Figures in a dream are wraiths without consistency, and in *Vampyr* Dreyer's density of gesture and emotion turns full circle. Tore's hands touching Berit's hair, or Ida's raised to welcome Victor, bear the full weight of their love; but David Gray touches—nothing.

* * *

The soundtrack of *Vampyr* is so incorporeal, the deliberately indistinct and halting dialogue so much an extension of its portrayal of a landscape in dissolution, that one is inclined to call it his last silent film. Conversely, the subtitles which punctuate *Jeanne d'Arc* and maintain the rhythm of question and answer (Dreyer objected bitterly to the sonorised version which removed the titles) make it feel like a sound film. With the sulky weight of both *Day of Wrath* and *Ordet* in mind, I would be tempted to suggest that Dreyer was happier with silence—if *Gertrud* did not exist as a triumphant refutation. Here, as Elliott Stein wrote in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, "The lighting is decanted from sequence to sequence on a wash of vibrant melancholy"; and it is almost as if both acting and dialogue were decanted from a discordant vintage to form a strangely harmonious whole.

A rather far-fetched comparison with the recent stage production of Ivy Compton-Burnett's *A Heritage and Its History* may help to illustrate what I mean. In her novels, characters seem to sit or stand about, lackadaisically discussing everything from the weather to incest and murder without changing tone, until at the end one is left with a curious impression that the appalling starkness of Greek tragedy has invaded a cosy living-room. Or such was the effect of *A Heritage and Its History* on the stage, produced by Frank Hauser like a grand opera in which everyone stands poised to sing, but not a note is heard. Instead, the words cry out from the hieratic poses, the silences, the gestures.

On the surface *Gertrud* looks, if not like an opera, at least like some quaintly charming and slightly creaking Pinero drama in which the characters face the audience rather than each other, speaking and moving with slow, stylised deliberation. Underneath, the sounds and real emotions cry out, linked and underscored by that decanted light and its "wash of vibrant melancholy." Gertrud lives her uninspired life with her husband, fends off an appeal for a renewal of their former love from a dry and lonely poet, and suffers an affair with a callow youth; and then she departs to live alone in Paris. The whole film is like a counterpoint for two voices—"I love you" and "Come with me"—which never quite coincide. Appeals ring out, never answered; and at the end, as Gertrud leaves for Paris, the impassive camera gazes from one empty room to the next while her husband disappears after her, calling "Gertrud . . . Gertrud!"

When Gertrud visits her young lover and undresses out of sight in the next room, the camera stays motionless beside the piano where Erland is still playing, as though there were an unattainable memory or feeling just out of reach. Resonances and references form a chain through the film. When Gertrud and Erland meet in the park and their foreheads slowly touch, it is as though the tender contact evokes the story of her dream of pursuit by a pack of snarling dogs; in the ante-chamber where the poet Lidman first makes his desperate appeal to her, a tapestry on the wall shows a Jezebel besieged by hounds. When Lidman visits her home and lights the candles beside the mirror he once gave her to mark their love, Gertrud appears framed in it, dressed in black; and as he turns to watch the ghost he remembers enter the room, we continue to watch the real Gertrud reflected in the mirror. Latent beneath the surface melancholy lies a mysterious radiance; and in the epilogue at the end, grown old and tranquil, Gertrud can say with perfect truth, "I have known love." Dreyer's darkness has grown light again.

I would like to thank Ib Monty and the Danish Film Museum for their courtesy in enabling me to view the Dreyer films. A complete Dreyer checklist will be published in the October issue of the MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN.

IN THE PICTURE

Summer Fires

A VILLAGE IN THE HEART of Corrèze named Le Rat: the location was discovered by Tony Richardson after weeks of peregrination up, down and across France. The village, far from the tourist beaten track, and the surrounding countryside with its forests, marshes and sweeping valleys, to which the capricious climate of Le Limousin lends an occasionally menacing air, fitted to perfection Jean Genet's tale of a schoolmistress's frustration which prompts her to acts of arson and general sabotage in the placid community. By the time the *Summer Fires* unit arrived, the village had been subtly augmented by extra stone walls and buildings, four ancient trees in the square, and a general shop of such authenticity as to fool even the technicians.

Work begins and so does the rain, and for

two weeks the unit slogs ankle deep through roads of thick mud. All the small parts in the picture are played by French actors; but Richardson decided to shoot in two versions, and the problem is to make the players speak with enough pace and feeling in English to provide convincing lip movements for eventual dubbing. Never good linguists, the French begin by bringing little more than energy and good intentions to this task; but after the first scenes they suddenly improve and soon there is no appreciable difference in quality between their scenes in English and those in their native language. And Richardson has cunningly grouped the early scenes in medium or long shot so that initial inadequacies are not revealed.

Everyone is keyed to the arrival of Jeanne Moreau, who turns up at the beginning of the second week—bright blonde. Moreau is still exhausted from the Mexican circus she had been engaged in with Bardot, and the question is how to tackle tactfully the matter of her wildly inappropriate hair. But she puts up little defence and two hours later she has already been changed to a more demure brown. The Italians have arrived: Ettore Manni, who plays the leading role of an itinerant woodcutter with a devastating effect on women (in the film he has a son played by an English fifteen-year-old discovered working on a milk-round in Teddington); and Umberto Orsini, who plays his workmate. Richardson obviously responds to the volatile multi-lingual atmosphere: the shooting, which had begun slowly, with conferences about whether to abandon the ambitious plan to shoot in two languages, now picks up and gets into a good stride.

Genet has disappeared into the blue, and Richardson is aware that the poetic style, the strongly visual appeal he wants for his film, calls for a pared-down script with no superfluous words anywhere. David Rudkin works on it for a few days, then the French critic Michel Cournot, then Richardson

himself and the producer Oscar Lewenstein, who also has a keen sense of words and who prunes the final version; but there still remain changes that have been made in French and not in English and vice versa. By which time Richardson is more concerned with the camera.

David Watkin, who came to the fore with his virtuoso feats in *The Knack* and *Help!*, is now aiming for a sober, restrained impression and works often with a dangerously small camera aperture which presents the French focus-puller with hazards he had never dreamed of before. But the early rushes reveal an astonishing texture with the fixed frame. The Panavision shape takes on a new aspect. "But when are you critics going to write an article blasting the appalling projection standard in England?" he moans. "Whenever one composes for CinemaScope or Panavision one can be sure that certain shots will be masked. There was a super shot in *Help!* with the grass just a thin green line at the base of the screen—but I bet no one will ever have a chance to see it. It'll be cut off in projection."

Moreau's part is one of dark frustration, but her off-screen mood is light and often mischievous. She admits that she only works happily with a director whose personality is strong and dominating and to whom she can submit without anxiety. ("J'aime les gens que je me sens capable de séduire et qui me séduisent!") She rehearses a scene which is mainly with local peasants. She is returning from the forest after a wild night of love with the Italian woodcutter. Her dress is muddy and bedraggled. At the school door she must turn and in answer to the peasants' insistent demand of "Was it him?" she must reply vindictively "Yes!" The peasants are clearly awe-struck by her haggard and hallucinatory aspect, and quite unprepared for the rehearsal when she suddenly wheels round and with wicked flippancy replies airily: "This time I'm not going to tell you!" And bangs the school door behind her, leaving them

JEANNE MOREAU IN "SUMMER FIRES".



aghast. But before the camera she is uncannily precise; every tiny movement charged with intention.

The village becomes an astounding island. One finds oneself early in the morning taking a walk to the local château with Marguerite Duras; Truffaut drops in; and David Mercer to discuss Woodfall's next film *The Sailor from Gibraltar*, based on a novel by Marguerite Duras. The villagers start to talk in cinema terms: "Are they shooting in the Town Hall today?" an old man asks, although the Town Hall has never existed until four weeks ago. One ancient crone continues to find the command "Silence! On tourne!" excruciatingly funny, and the clapper boy's announcement of the scene number is sufficient to send her into a cackling scream of mirth which thoroughly panics the sound man. When someone remonstrates she clouts the crowd with her stick and screams the louder. Rien à faire.

The English and French, true to their chauvinism, have managed inevitably to set up two camps. A curious incident brings about a rapprochement. Oscar Lewenstein has the misfortune to describe something as 'camp.' The word spreads like wildfire. What is 'camp'? By now Watkin is ready to shoot, but the discussion has taken fire under the driving rain. 'Camp' is Dietrich wearing feathers in *Desire*; 'camp' is Garbo eating grapes in *Queen Christina*. Camp is queer, camp is everything under the sun. Individual French members of the crew rush up with solutions and the air of having located Atlantis. 'Camp' is *être en représentation*, it is *maniéré*, *fantasque*, *farfelu*, *racaille*. Camp, someone rightly suggests, is a group of people at night, under the blinding rain in *Le Rat*, discussing what is 'camp' when everything is ready to shoot. But somehow the air has been cleared for co-production.

The small part actors start to move away; protracted farewells and the feeling that the tiny microcosm that had seemed so permanent is now irrevocably breaking up. Moreau and Manni are left to do their long love scene in the forest which will finish the picture. The conversation turns to *The Sailor from Gibraltar* and locations in Egypt and Ethiopia; characters can be seen walking about with copies of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, scheduled for next April to be shot in England and Turkey. And in the production office is an estimate for restoring *Le Rat* to its original state, without the trees, the shop, the walls and the extra buildings...

DEREK PROUSE

SF at Trieste

SCIENCE FICTION HAS ALWAYS been at its most successful in short story form, and to judge from this year's Trieste Festival film-makers appear to have recognised the fact. Everything of real interest other than *Alphaville* was less than thirty minutes long, and coincidentally shared the same theme, with the result that Trieste seemed to resound as often with warnings about human inadequacy as with the hollow clatter of electronic music.

The three-minute warning provided by Harold Becker's *Birds* made a powerful opening short, or would have done if projection troubles had not reduced it to a final fragment. An impression of atomic bombardment rather like a brief amalgamation of 23 *Skidoo* and the ending of *Fail Safe*, its skywatchings lead to a hail of crisply edited shots of children and pigeons

in headlong flight from a New York playground. A more leisurely pace, although an equally pessimistic mood, was set by the Dutch short *Dream Without End*, which describes how news of a comet on collision course with Earth finds most of the world too involved in its own affairs to give a damn. Directed with a fine sense of nightmare by Max De Haas, with seedy and occasionally outlandish settings, it is as scathing a picture of social decay as a Frederick Pohl novel—a sort of *Lower Depths* garnished with robots and astronomical paraphernalia.

The prize for the best short went to *L'Invasione*, a satisfying if conventional tale about a man who discovers that aliens are infiltrating key positions in local government. It was directed by a comparative newcomer from Italian television, Camillo Bazzoni, whose precise, almost shorthand style has a furious speed and energy. The central character spends nearly the whole film on the run; and Bazzoni's camera sweeps him along in a torrent of tracking shots, pans and zooms entirely in keeping with the restless undercurrent concern of the film—the fear that dehumanisation, fast and unnoticed, is overtaking mankind. The aliens, recognisable by distinctive sunglasses, appear with grim dedication in the classroom (where they preach, as the machine preaches in *Alphaville*, that honesty, morality and conscience do not exist), in the police force and even in the Church—an irony much appreciated by the Trieste audience. *L'Invasione* has been such a success, despite its unconcealedly abrasive tone, that Bazzoni has already been approached to absorb the film into a trilogy on the same subject.

Meanwhile a trend in French cinema which perhaps began as long ago as *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, has made another remarkable advance with *La Brûlure de Mille Soleils*, the first animation film by Pierre Kast. Edited by last year's prizewinner, Chris Marker, it was the only short at Trieste this year which seemed to me to match the standard set by *La Jetée*. Again a parable, the film is concerned with the egocentric smallness of the human mind, the example being an Earthman of the distant future whose love affair with a girl on another planet is frustrated by his

inability to recognise that her way of life has completely alien standards. Put together from paintings by a Spanish surrealist artist, Eduardo Luis, whose suffused landscapes and delicately tapering figures provide the perfect balance to the gentle melancholy of the hero's monologue, the film nevertheless has the same touch of mocking censure at its core as was evident in Kast's *Le Bel Age* and *Vacances Portugaises*. The only weakness is the ending, which switches unexpectedly to live action and Alexandra Stewart; otherwise this is one of the most effective screen interpretations so far of the constant science fiction crusade not so much for a better world as for better people on it.

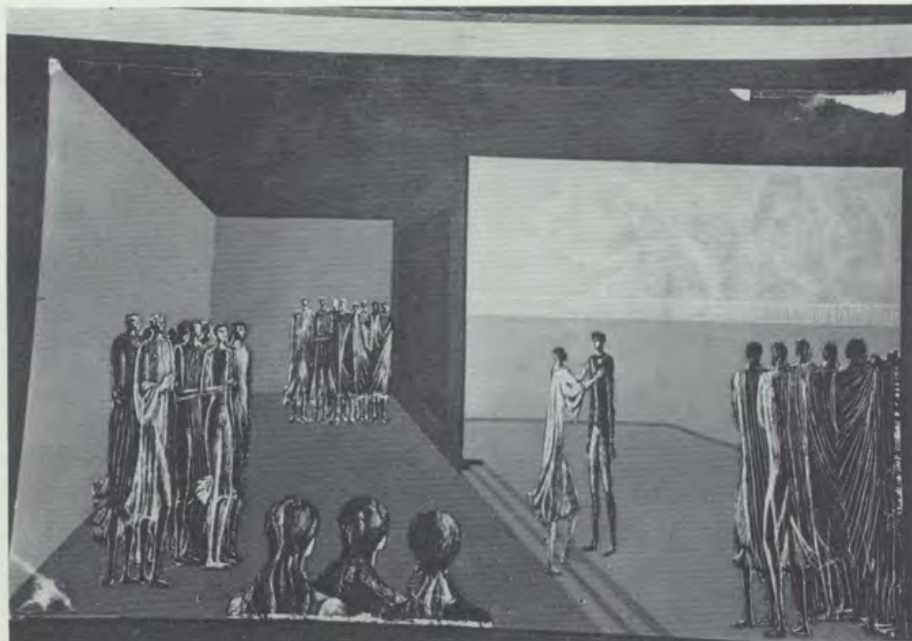
PHILIP STRICK

What New Cinema?

IN 1962 A SMALL GROUP of breakaways, in polemic with the official festival set-up in Italy, founded the Festival of Free Cinema (Cinema Libero) at Porretta Terme. The enterprise was small, impecunious and disorganised, but basically serious and (if you find decaying watering places at all tolerable) sympathetic. What 'free cinema' meant in an Italian or international context was never quite clear, but Porretta could be thought to provide a rather better focus for independent production struggling for recognition than any of the bigger international circuses like Cannes or Venice. This year, Porretta has begotten a successor after its own kind in the form of the Festival of the New Cinema at Pesaro, which is larger, better financed and organised, but correspondingly more pretentious and (unless you happen to like Adriatic seaside resorts) rather less sympathetic.

This year's festival, which is supposed to be the prototype of many others, was articulated into three parts: the showing of first films by new directors, discussion of the aesthetic problems of the modern cinema, and discussion of problems of distribution for new films—all three in themselves very worthwhile activities. But as the week wore on, it became more and more manifest that there was between these activities only the most tenuous and tendentious relation. Of the films shown, some were so old-fashioned that they could not possibly help to define

"LA BRÛLURE DE MILLE SOLEILS".



the specifically modern tendencies theorised by the aestheticians: others were so bad that no distributor would dare present them to even the most open-minded audience. The discussions on distribution reached a partial deadlock when it was realised that the bland internationalism of the 'new cinema' formula bore no relation to economic and cultural realities. Meanwhile, the aesthetic discussion moved off into realms of its own peopled by such strange entities as im-signs, cinegraphic morpheme analysis and such-like paraphernalia of *ad hoc* cine-linguistic theory.

That, as a result of this get-together, any of the films shown should be launched on a triumphant commercial career and at the same time initiate an aesthetic revolution, which was an implausible piece of wishful thinking from the start, came by the end of the session to appear a proven impossibility. The curious thing, one felt, was that anyone could have had the idea in the first place.

Behind all the rhetoric and propaganda—of which there was plenty—stood a set of basic, unexamined, and in my opinion false assumptions revolving around the specious concept of the new cinema itself, from which all the subsequent confusion followed. The organisers of the festival obviously believed that there is at the present moment, all over the world, a new cinema specifically different from the old; that this new cinema has certain common aesthetic characteristics and common problems of making itself known and understood and commercially acceptable; and further that it is the work of new directors which displays these characteristics best and is also most in need of support.

These assumptions, if true, would more than justify the existence of the Pesaro festival. But for a start the initial concept of 'new cinema' is ambiguous. Is it supposed to mean just this year's films as opposed to those of five years ago, or does it refer to a presumed modern style of film-making? If the former, then of course the new cinema exists, but the fact is hardly significant. This year's films are simply this year's films. They are not necessarily as a whole different or better than those of a few years ago. If the latter, then it must be pointed out that at the present moment no such thing exists as a distinct phenomenon; or if it does, then it is a European phenomenon of the Sixties, not a worldwide phenomenon specific to any one year.

There is some sense in saying that Resnais and Antonioni, Godard and Bertolucci, however different their work, all reflect aspects of the same general crisis in the forms of cinematic expression. But this crisis is old, and the 'ultra-modern' Antonioni has been working his way towards a solution for fifteen years. Equally, the same crisis is not felt in Japan, which has its own traditions, or in America. Meanwhile the new movement in Czechoslovakia would appear (and this is one of its greatest merits) to be very much a home-grown product connected with a belated destalinisation, and has precious little to do with *nouvelles vagues*, *cinémas vérité* or any of the catchphrases of the West.

The same principle of national differentiation applies even more strongly in the commercial sphere. Countries with no 'old cinema' can perhaps make common cause in distributing the new films of other countries in a similar situation. But no level-headed distributor in England or America is going to make himself the lonely promoter of films which have little cultural relevance



THAMES-SIDE LOCATION FOR "SCRUGGS". SUSANNAH YORK, RAOUL COUTARD AND DAVID HART, YOUNG DIRECTOR OF THIS FILM ABOUT A GIRL AND A GUNMAN.

and even less audience appeal, for no better reason than that this is the 'new cinema'. To suppose that he would be to display a bland, but perhaps excusable, ignorance of the realities of monopoly distribution and traditional movie-culture in advanced capitalist countries. It is hard enough in these countries to find distribution for Buñuel or Kurosawa. . .

Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily, says the old philosophical adage. And unnecessary festivals should not be based on unnecessary entities. There was a lot that was useful in the discussions at Pesaro—if only a recognition that the real problems were more complex than the formulae. It would be a great pity if occasions of this kind were to cease to exist. But for me, the best event of Pesaro this year was an escape from the festival centre to a commercial cinema which was showing *My Darling Clementine*. Come to think of it, there is a difference between old and new cinema, and there are moments when one distinctly prefers the old.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

Argentina

PERON, I WAS TOLD, both created and destroyed Argentina's cinema industry. He did much to strengthen the unions and increase production, but quality dropped to rock bottom and Argentina lost her former position as main exporter of films to the Spanish-speaking world; a position Mexico happily filled and still holds today, despite a recent strong and determined comeback from Argentina's younger filmmakers.

Cinema is taken very seriously—as are most pleasures and all forms of work—in Argentina. Buenos Aires' Alex laboratory is the largest and best equipped in Latin America, with its 36 cutting-rooms and total area of 8,717 square yards. Skilled technicians abound, and both finance and film stock are provided by the Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía, which also awards cash prizes based on a fixed percentage of ticket sales. Unlike Brazilians, Argentines flock to see their own films, which get wide attention in the press.

Central Buenos Aires boasts sixty cinemas. New foreign releases turn up promptly, and most of the more expensive cinemas (about 6/-) still provide a stage show and printed programme.

It all sounds perfect, but it isn't. Not to get one of the annual prizes (chosen by a jury of about fifteen people) means a death sentence for a film, and possible ruin for its maker. Only about half of Argentina's annual output of some 35 full-length features get prizes; and only films that have been awarded an 'A' certificate by the board of censors can even enter in the first place. 'A' and 'B' certificates are awarded on a basis of quality only; of censorship proper there is now little, and foreign films are usually left intact. (This is a recent development: twenty minutes were lopped off Bergman's *The Silence*.) Pre-censorship, however, still exists, the Institute having to approve a script before it will finance it. This is a welcome change from the puritanical Peron days, although in this respect the great dictator probably did more good than harm in the long run. His repressive policies caused a very healthy film club movement to start; and this in turn led to an attitude to film-making based on a thorough familiarity with world cinema—an attitude lacking until quite recently in Brazil.

If an Argentine film gets a 'B,' it is not liable to be compulsorily shown at home. This means, of course, that few distributors will even think about showing it. In some cases it can still be exported, and a certain trade does flourish in films of no merit but high sales potential, usually starring either Isabel Sarli or Libertad Leblanc in various stages of undress. This type of film is rarely shown in Argentina, except in the sleazier areas.

To make anything like a healthy profit, an Argentine-made film must be sold abroad. This fact stifles much directing talent almost at birth, for while a young director may find his feet with a short, he may not be able to spread himself in the way he would like into a full-length feature, simply because the temptation to compromise is too strong.

Yet the Argentine is a very persistent breed, and many of the younger directors are commendably uncommercial in their

approach. Both Manuel Antin and Rodolfo Kuhn saw their latest films given a 'B,' though both managed to get the decision reversed. They were lucky, for much valuable material is annually consigned to oblivion by the judges. So far, only Torre Nilsson has fully beaten the system, thanks partly to his obviously undeniable talent, partly to his considerable skill as a salesman for his own work abroad.

Manuel Antin, now 39, is a quiet, self-effacing intellectual who started life as a poet and novelist, later turning to TV scripting. He has only filmed one of his own stories (*Los Venerables Todos*), his other three features being based on works by Julio Cortazar. On his recent film, *Intimidad le los Parques*, he used Peruvian financial backing and locations at the Inca ruins of Macchu Picchu to make Peru's first feature. Antin, for all his unflappable calm, is a first-rate technician who works at astonishing speed, rarely using a shooting script and often improvising as he goes along.

Rodolfo Kuhn, ten years younger than Antin, is a young veteran of shorts now working for a living in television. His latest feature, *Pajarito Gomes*, is a sardonic and hard-hitting screen biography of a pop singer from humble origins to sudden death in a train smash (while the signalman was distracted by his idol's voice on the radio). Kuhn goes about as far as he dares in knocking the local establishment, and his film is one of the two most discussed pictures of the year in Buenos Aires. The other is the first film of a hopeful newcomer, the former actor Leonid Favio, whose stark autobiography *Cronica de un Niño Solo* impressed critics and public alike. Favio's debt to Bresson is obvious, yet the effect he achieves is cathartic rather than imitative.

GUY PLAYFAIR

Ants in a Snakeskin

EARLIER THIS YEAR Ingmar Bergman was chosen to share the Erasmus Prize with Charles Chaplin. Because of his slow recovery from a serious virus infection, he was unable to attend the prize ceremonies in Amsterdam in June, when his speech was read by Kenne Fant. Several weeks later Bergman revised the speech slightly and published his "confessions" in the Stockholm daily *Expressen*.

"For me, artistic creation has always manifested itself as a hunger. I have been able to observe this need with a certain satisfaction, but I have never asked myself why this hunger set in and insisted on being satisfied. Now that it has started to diminish and be transformed into something else, I feel that it is important to discover the causes of my 'artistic activity'."

So Bergman's article began, and he went on to trace his development from early childhood, when he felt a strong desire to attract the attention of grown-ups, until now, when he has come to the conclusion that he creates only for his own satisfaction. In childhood, reality was insufficient, and he used to live in a world of fantasy; but when he shared it with others, he was accused of lying. He decided, therefore, to keep it to himself, but still had the need to communicate, to get people to listen to him. As he became increasingly lonely, this need grew, and he found that he could communicate through films "in a language that is spoken literally from soul to soul."

"With the entire pent-up hunger of a child, I flung myself into my medium, and for twenty years in a sort of tireless frenzy I pursued dreams, experiences of the senses,



INGMAR BERGMAN. PHOTOGRAPH BY FREDERIC FLEISHER.

fantasies, outbursts of madness, neuroses, religious spasms and pure lies. . . Today the situation is less complicated, less interesting, above all less glamorous. Consequently, to be completely frank, I find art (not only the art of the cinema) unimportant.

"With magnificent eagerness the artists project, for themselves and an increasingly distracted audience, images of a world that no longer asks what they think and feel." Art is now "a snakeskin filled with ants. The snake, deprived of its poison, has been dead a long time, but the skin moves, teeming with meddlesome life." But Bergman is still one of those ants in the snakeskin—"Even though I feel that the theatre is a beloved old mistress who has seen better days; even though I and many others find Westerns more stimulating than Antonioni or Bergman; even though literature is transformed into cairns of words devoid of meaning or attack. . ."

"People today can reject the theatre since they live in the centre of a drama that unceasingly explodes in local tragedies. They do not need music since their hearing is bombarded every minute by tremendous hurricanes in which the limit of pain is reached and exceeded. They do not need literature since the new image of the world has transformed them into functional animals, bound to the interesting but, from the poetical point of view, unusable problems of metabolism."

"Religion and the arts are kept alive for sentimental reasons, as a conventional politeness to the past, a benevolent concern over the leisure time of increasingly neurotic citizens."

As to why Bergman continues to work with art: "The reason is curiosity: a boundless, never satisfied, constantly renewed, unbearable curiosity that urges me on, that never lets me rest, that has entirely replaced the past hunger for fellowship. I feel like a prisoner who has tumbled out into the booming, shrieking, snorting world after a long period of confinement. I am seized by an irrepressible curiosity. I take note, observe, keep watch, everything is unreal, fantastic, frightening or foolish. I catch a flying speck of dust, perhaps it is a film. What importance does it have? None whatsoever, but I personally find it interesting; and it becomes a film. I move around with my trapped object, and am gaily and sadly busy. I push with the other ants. We work terribly hard. The snakeskin moves."

In conclusion, Bergman wrote: "To be an artist for your own sake is not always pleasant, but it has one tremendous advantage. The artist shares his condition with every living being, and they too exist only for their own sakes. Grouped together, this becomes a sizeable brotherhood, existing in selfish fellowship on this warm, dirty earth under a cool and empty sky."

On various occasions Bergman has stressed how important it is for the artist to remain independent of his audience and devote himself entirely to his art; and in *Now About These Women*, the famous cellist Felix dies just as he is about to submit to one of his critics.

Edited and translated by
FREDERIC FLEISHER

Work in Progress

France

ROBERT BRESSON: *Au Hasard, Balthazar*, the ultimate in non-professional casting with the leading role taken by a donkey, through whose eyes the world (around Paris and in the Pyrenees) is seen. Parc Film-Argos Films-Svensk Filmindustri.

JEAN-LUC GODARD: *La Femme de Paul avec Le Sourire*, based on two Guy de Maupassant stories, the first about a man (Jean-Pierre Léaud) whose wife turns from him to another woman, and the second about a foreign girl who is taken for a prostitute by a passer-by (Michel Piccoli) at whom she smiles. Co-production with Svensk Filmindustri.

JACQUES RIVETTE: *La Religieuse*, based on Diderot, with Anna Karina (who played in Rivette's stage version) and Francisco Rabal in the leading roles. A Georges de Beauregard production.

Great Britain

DESMOND DAVIS: *Passage of Love*, the first film set up under the joint NFFC/Rank arrangement, based on an unpublished short story by Edna O'Brien about a girl's nostalgia for her homeland. With Sarah Miles and Cyril Cusack. Partisan for Rank.

DAVID HART: *Scruggs*, shot in three weeks on location in London by Raoul Coutard. Hart, a twenty-one-year-old Old Etonian, also persuaded Susannah York to play the lead in this film about a girl and an intellectual gunman (Ben Carruthers). A Juvenal Production.

RICHARD LESTER: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, slapstick comedy based on the stage musical and also on much detailed research into life in ancient Rome. With Zero Mostel, Phil Silvers and Buster Keaton. Panama-Frank for United Artists.

ROMAN POLANSKI: *Cul-de-Sac*, Polanski's second script collaboration with Gerard Brach, a mixture of love, violence and black humour, shot largely on location near Holy Island. With Donald Pleasence, Françoise Dorléac and Lionel Stander. Presented by Michael Klingner and Tony Tenser for Compton-Cameo.

U.S.A.

JOHN FRANKENHEIMER: *Seconds*, suspense drama about a man (Rock Hudson) who tries to renew his youth by means of plastic surgery. Photographed by James Wong Howe. Gibraltar for Paramount.

JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ: *Tale of the Fox*, based at several removes on Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, about a rich man who invites all the women from his past to a reunion in Venice. With Rex Harrison and Maggie Smith. Feldman for United Artists.



THE BLACK ADMINISTRATION TOWER AT UNIVERSAL CITY.

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD 1965

Charles Higham

DEMOLITION OF THE OLD VITAGRAPH STUDIO, NOW ABC TV CENTRE.



A GLIMPSE, BEFORE REACHING HOLLYWOOD, of the "other" American cinema, and its nucleus: the Berkeley home of Ernest Callenbach, editor of *Film Quarterly*, who is currently working on a film of the student "teach-ins" at the nearby University of California. Here, in the unkempt backwaters of San Francisco, experimental film-makers have managed to keep going in defiance of the "official" cinema down the coast. Working as gas-station attendants, wharf labourers or night drivers, they have poured their savings into 16 or 8 mm. films in which their private worlds are relentlessly explored with hand-held cameras.

At a *causerie* with Callenbach and friends, the word about

Hollywood is excessively gloomy: mixed reports on the one possible white hope, Elliot Silverstein's spoof Western, *Cat Ballou*; Sam Peckinpah switching studios in high dudgeon after the editing of *Major Dundee*; and no new mavericks of interest on the horizon. Only Gavin Lambert and Robert Mulligan's *Inside Daisy Clover* and, possibly, Richardson's *The Loved One* (though rumoured to have been re-cut by Martin Ransohoff, the producer) seem to augur well for the future. And the Hollywood Museum project, dream-child of the unlikely matching of Arthur Knight, middle-brow film critic of *The Saturday Review*, and Sol ("Tarzan") Lesser, has foundered, at least for the time being, in a welter of financial

arguments. On this first day of a month-long Californian visit, the Hollywood scene threatens to be as drab and sad as San Francisco itself.

Travelling down central California by bus, along interminable highways lined with scruffy oleander bushes, one realises how only Hitchcock, with his foreigner's eye, has brought to life on film the emptiness and strangeness of this kind of American landscape. From the *Vertigo* townscape of San Francisco and Marin County, the road runs into the kind of dead-flat terrain in which Cary Grant was sprayed with an Illinois crop-duster's bullets in *North by Northwest*. And after that, one enters a territory familiar from innumerable sub-Hitchcock crime films: weird and sinister mountain canyons, a distraught woman running from a hilltop cabin to the road to explain something through tears to two massively goggled cops . . . It's no surprise to pass soon after—beyond the squat black skyscraper at Universal City—the *Psycho* motel. . .

Hollywood at last, after hours struggling through traffic snarls along the edge of tawny, camel's hump hills and dingy vegetation blanketed in fog. A sparkle of mauve and pink electric signs, a dazzle of cars along the freeways, and Hollywood Boulevard, full of savagely aggressive commuters and the faint sting of summer rain.

A visit, later that evening, to Mildred Pierce's, a restaurant named after the one started up by Joan Crawford with Zachary Scott's money in that quintessential Forties melodrama. The dishes are titled after characters in the script—Ida's Special, Monty's Special—and the décor recreates Mildred's roadside venture at Malibu . . . Elsewhere, though, I am to find out that scarcely anyone has bothered to commemorate Hollywood's past; and it's true, they tell me, that they have covered over the site of the prospective Museum for a parking lot.

* * *

Hollywood. Immediately you pick up the telephone, you get the feel of the place: icily impersonal telephonists' voices, indistinguishable from the mechanically recorded ones which constantly interrupt the caller, telling him he has incorrectly dialled, or to wait until somebody is ready to answer him. And at the coffee-shop at breakfast, the tall waitress behind the counter slamming down the opaque ice-water and the sausage-and-scrambled has the high, piled hair, the freezing jocular and savage line in wisecracks of a younger Susan Hayward.

Unlike most towns, Hollywood flaunts its worst areas at the tourist and hides its better ones away. The immediate impressions of the suburb of Hollywood itself do nothing for a liver reeling at the impact of last night's double vodka martini. Along Hollywood Boulevard, seedy pink coral and bronze stars stud the speckled paving-stones, containing replicas of cameras and the names of performers going back to the early silent period. Each morning you walk over forgotten names: Jean Muir, Art Acord, Monte Blue, Toby Wing, Helen Mack, Louise Lovely. . . they stretch away as far as the eye can see, relics of a Hollywood almost everyone there has put on the shelf. I walk over Hedda Hopper, and Barbara Stanwyck's agent says to me on the telephone: "Go right back, honey, and do it over. . ."

Over the pink stars, sad, pale and shabby people slouch past in shapeless suits, and those peculiar American shoes which look like squashed licorice. The women wear curlers in their hair to go shopping, seldom bothering to don a protective scarf. The young men hanging around the street corners or in the doorways of cafés in black leather jackets and white jeans are male prostitutes, calling out their wares to single men in passing cars. Almost all the buildings are one-storeyed, prefabricated shops, or cafés which on billboards 16 feet high proclaim the food to be had within: STEAK'N'TATER, DOLLAR NINETY FIVE, PIE A LA MODE, MUFFINS ALL YOU CAN EAT. As dusk falls, electric signs flicker eerily, pale green or sickly pink. Over the crammed parking-lots, giant palm trees droop their shabby leaves in the rain or white peppering of smog. Even the façade of the Brown Derby in Vine Street, expensive rendezvous of the press agents and the stars, has the grubby whiteness of an unwashed face.

Each afternoon the tourists set out disconsolately from their hotels on the afternoon bus tours of Dreamland: to, most likely, the impeccable winding roads, groomed lawns and Home Beautiful houses of Beverly Hills. Along the way, old ladies sell maps to the stars' homes, most of them twenty years out of date . . . and as the buses negotiate the palm-lined streets, a guide talks about the inhabitants, and if you are lucky you can actually see Loretta Young taking out the dog.

* * *

Now even the studios, for so long grim fortresses secured against the world, have opened their gates to the tourists. At Universal, candy-striped trams slide along the streets resembling Paris, London or Rome, or take a minor detour to the sinister little hill where stands the *Psycho* motel. At Warners, the crowds cluster in a giant marquee where vintage cars and uncomfortable-looking waxwork drivers advertise *The Great Race*. At Universal, Frankenstein's monster may, if you are in luck, actually pick up and kiss your child.

Universal, owned by MCA, the tentacular giant which also controls a record company and massive real estate developments, is the most triumphant of the modern studios. For many years the home of horror pictures and cheap Westerns, it churns out interminable series in both genres and forms the centre of a vast industrial complex including a bank, a hotel now building, and the largest backlot in Hollywood, stretching over hundreds of acres to the bleak hills above Lankershim Boulevard. Above the drab streets and the *Deserto Rosso* factories of North Hollywood looms the grandly brooding black spandulite, glass and steel tower where many of the executives live, a 190-foot tombstone honouring Lew Wasserman, boss of MCA. (There is a charming rumour around Hollywood that the walls, mounted on coasters, are moved by janitors at night when the offices are deserted: in if you are out of favour, out if you are in. . . Find yourself one morning in something resembling a telephone booth, and you can start looking in the want ads.)

Universal's own *Mirage* conveys something of this atmosphere, and going into the tower, ascending in a lift of prickly-looking bomb-proof steel, can give you the feeling of being trapped in a safe, with the door locked from the outside. At lunch in the black leather-seated commissary, with everyone in funereal dark grey (by Wasserman's orders) the feeling is still of being in attendance at an interment.

Elsewhere, though, the studios have a gaudy air of celebration. Paramount's administration building has the atmosphere of a high-class country club, and has recently been refurbished in that pallid Hollywood luxury style so constant throughout the studios that it might have sprung from the same designer: pastel, faded colours, beige and cream settees, carpets and walls, and the frequent glint of gold thread. Warners while I was there flung a half-million-dollar party for the world's press to launch *The Great Race*, and it was just like the good old days: a helicopter hovering over the crowd with a greeting spelled out in lights, 1,500 meals of soup, squab and ice cream served on Stage Eight, and Jack Warner on stage in person, to swap lavatory jokes with Phil Silvers and Dean Martin. At Metro, they flaunted a giant sign at you as you drove in the gate: 18 new productions, and a host of others just around the corner. And the blockbusters really are paying off this year, or so everyone says: *The Yellow Rolls Royce*, *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Sound of Music*, *Goldfinger*, *Mary Poppins*. . . If some of the studios seem to be hanging on the threads of single successes, at least those threads are made of gold.

* * *

Yet behind the luxury and the confidence, Hollywood is gripped by quite a few fears, doubts and regrets. The costs of production have risen to a staggering extent in the last few years. The audience demands greater and greater size, and every new production is a terrifying gamble: and the biggest gamble of all is on the pulling power of the few remaining big stars, many of whom demand a million dollars or more a picture. "I couldn't make *Becket* now," Hal Wallis told me.

"Burton and O'Toole have priced themselves over a million each since it was made." Even a supremely successful producer like Disney is concerned by the limitations imposed by the very size of his vast audience. He told me that, uncertain of its appeal to a present-day generation, he has had to broaden his forthcoming cartoon of Kipling's *Jungle Book* into a musical, while he has had considerable doubts about *Winnie the Pooh*, which in the animation follows the subtle and attractive original illustrations by Ernest Shepard. Reputedly originally designed as a full-length feature, *Winnie the Pooh* has been divided into two; and whether the second is completed and released will depend on the success of the first as a support to a live-action feature. Evidently, Disney is concerned at the fact that the huge audience which is gobbling up the Mary Poppinses and Great Races may not go for anything as cool, delicate and civilised as A. A. Milne's little classic.

Nostalgia for a past when it was possible to make medium-budget pictures for a more or less captive audience was the predominating mood I found even in this brash new Hollywood. Nostalgia reflected, of course, in the obsession with remakes; among them *Stagecoach*, with Ann-Margret in the Claire Trevor role. (Ross Hunter at Universal, shrewdest of the younger producers and adorer of Hollywood's lost past, has just finished a new version of *Madame X* with Lana Turner and has bought the rights to the old Merle Oberon weepie *Dark Angel* from Goldwyn.) And nostalgia, too, for the old system whereby a studio could retain a stable of stars, moving them on from picture to picture, paying them weekly salaries, granting them annual leave like bank clerks.

Even the stars themselves seemed to regret those days, and of those I spoke to, Cary Grant, Barbara Stanwyck, Bette Davis and Joseph Cotten all felt a twinge of dismay at the way things have gone. And there was talk everywhere of the shortage of new stars. Wasn't he, I asked Ross Hunter, worried about the rapid ageing of the few major stars left, the fact that Lana Turner (whose performance in *Madame X* would, he insisted, put her in a new class as an actress) was, in her mid-forties, among the youngest of the stars? "Yes, I tell you my next picture is going to be called 'Menopause Love', and the one after that 'The Wheel Chair', and the one after that 'The Stretcher'." Seriously, he thought that the studios would have to reintroduce the system of training stables of new players. But that, too, presented a problem. "Their agents won't let them sign long-term contracts. They say, 'You make one picture, it makes money, you can ask twice as much for the next one.' So with each picture the price goes up. And up. Soon you're Shirley MacLaine, and you want a million dollars a picture."

Angela Lansbury, a great actress who has never needed to be a star, laid the blame for the star situation firmly at the door of the exhibitors. "They sell pictures on stars," she said. "They always have. They will have to reorientate their thinking." In ten years, one couldn't help feeling, there won't be any great stars capable of sustaining an even remotely youngish role. Cary Grant would be around 72, James Stewart 67, Doris Day and Lana Turner in their fifties, Joan Crawford and Bette Davis in their late sixties. The new faces don't seem made to last in the same way.

Everyone around the Hollywood top echelons seemed to be obsessed with the subject of stars, but all predicted that there wouldn't be any need for them in the 1970's. They felt that story, colour, size and careful promotion would solve everyone's selling problems; one felt, too, that they were tired of the stars and their demands, and would be glad to see them go. But didn't, one felt like saying, people still go to the movies chiefly to see certain stars?

* * *

With the vanishing of the great products of a star system irretrievably buried in the past, the low or medium budget genre which produced most of the best Hollywood films has also gone into oblivion. John Houseman, last stalwart of the old "quality" school, is out of work. David O. Selznick died, with theatrical significance, while I was in Hollywood. The brief experiment at Universal, in which untried directors were



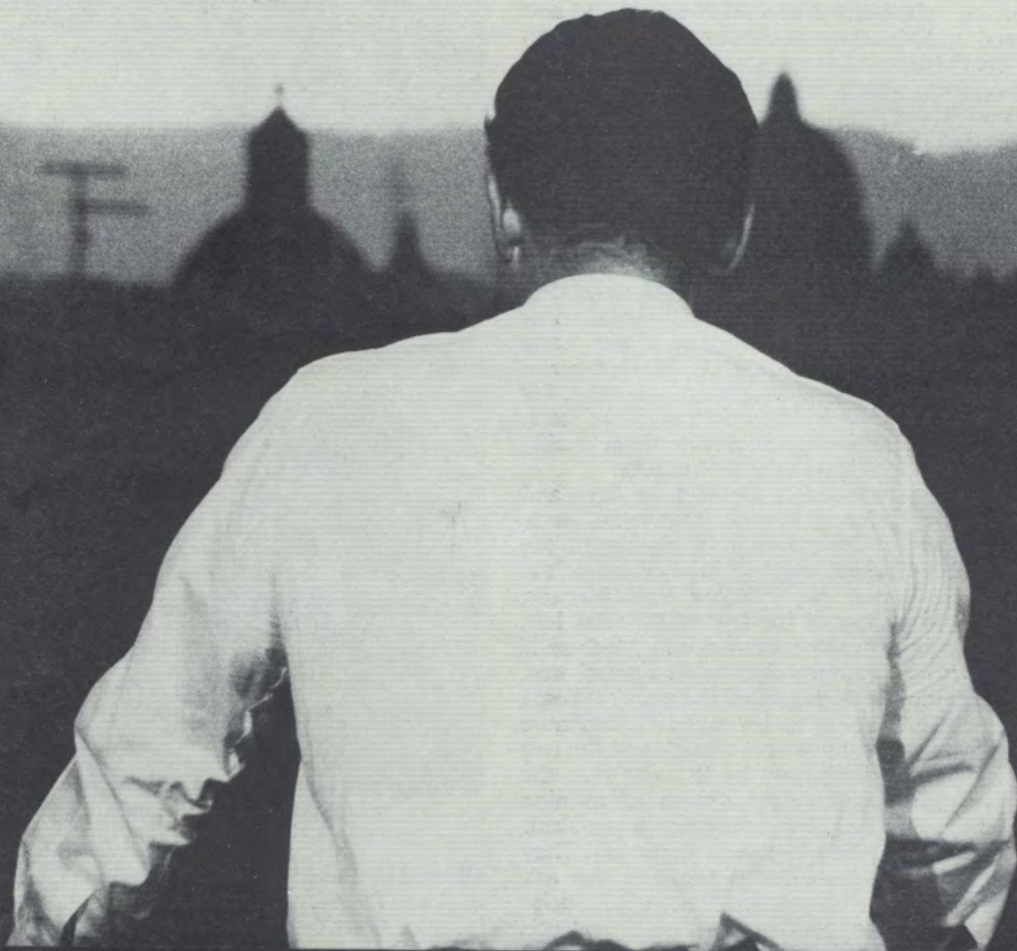
"INSIDE DAISY CLOVER". NATALIE WOOD AND RUTH GORDON.

allowed to make low-budget pictures (*Fargo*, *Bus Riley's Back in Town*) foundered immediately the box-office receipts came in. Like American publishing, the movie business has less and less room for the idiosyncratic, personal work as time goes on. The sheer size of the market crushes everyone who can't learn to manufacture large-scale mass entertainment, and even the best directors tend to dismiss their past work, no matter what its quality, if it failed to make money.

Only a few people I met in Hollywood seemed to be hanging on to their consciences: John Frankenheimer, grimly directing David Ely's brainwashing *Seconds* with Rock Hudson and an evil-eyed Khigh Dhiegh (of *The Manchurian Candidate*), and stepping out to his dressing-room to talk with striking intensity of his beating of the system, obtaining the right of final cut on his film; Elliot Silverstein, a pale young New York intellectual who has survived the brutal schedules of television to make *Cat Ballou* virtually on his own terms at Columbia; Ernest Lehman, shrewd and witty scriptwriter of *North by Northwest*, now working on *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* with Mike Nichols; and Robert Mulligan, who has been allowed to direct *Inside Daisy Clover* with an unusual degree of freedom at Warners.

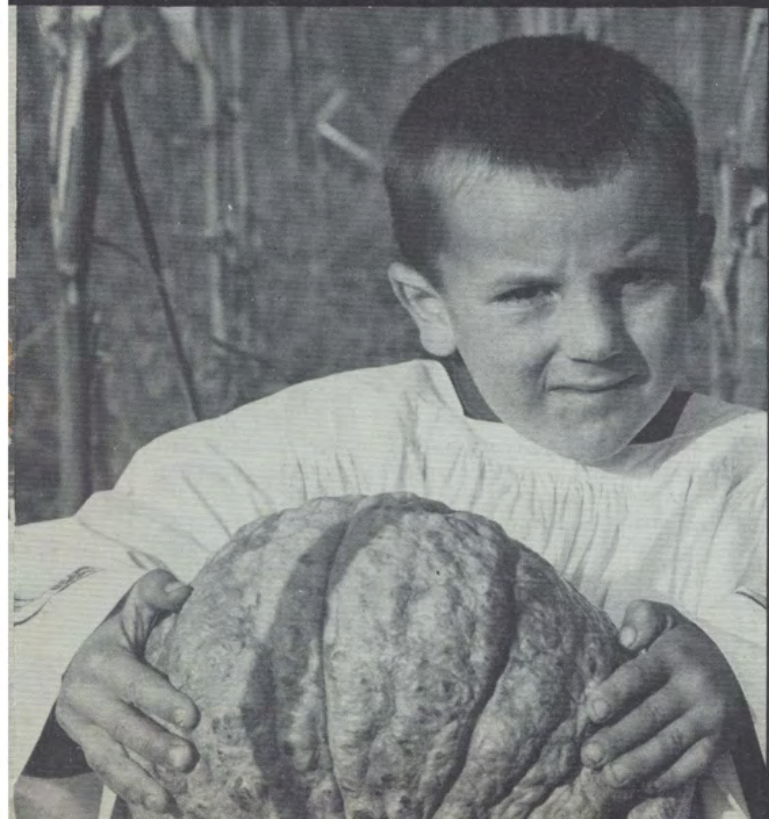
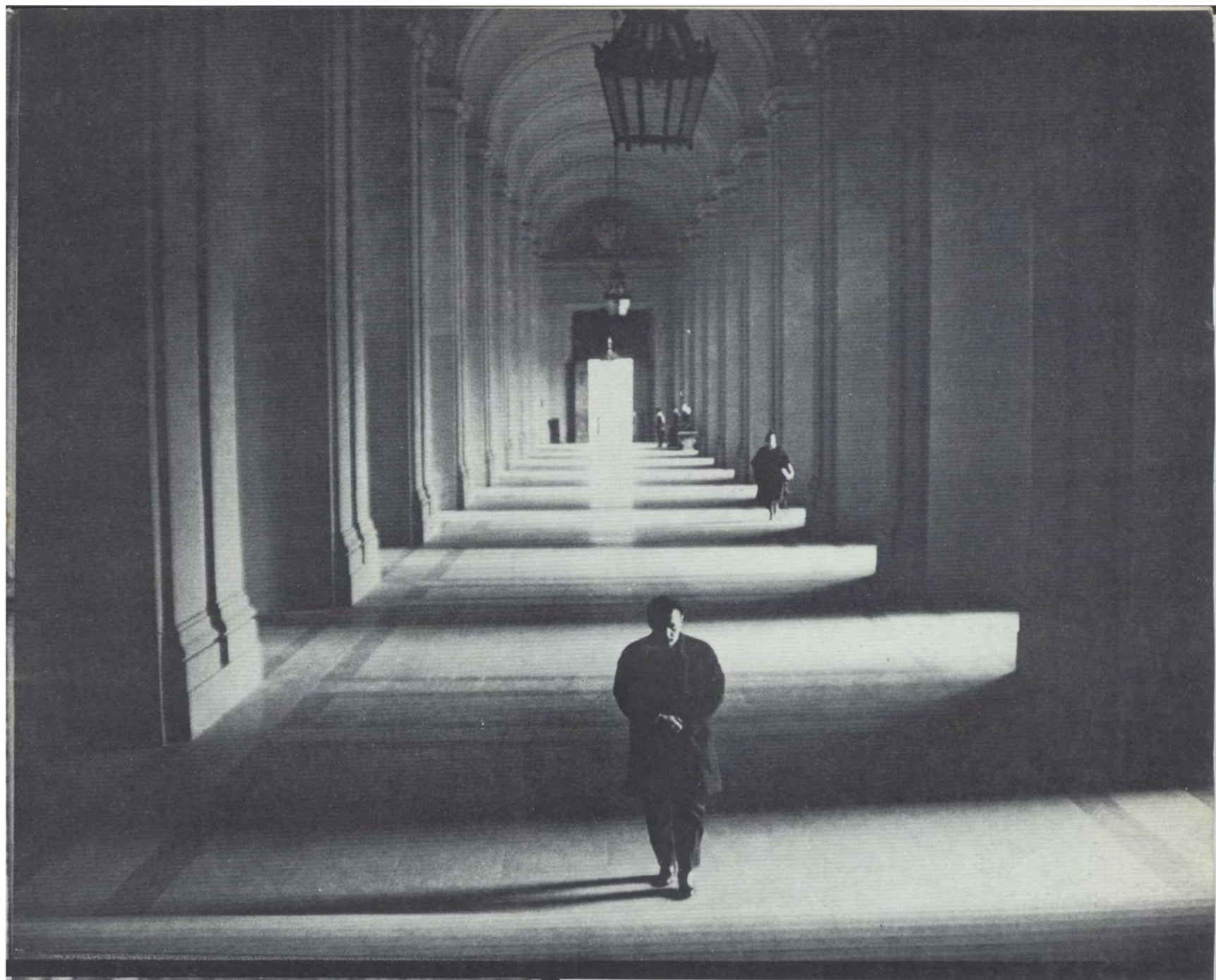
Many of these people seem to feel that Pay TV will help solve their future problems, that when it comes (in five years, most predict), and can recoup a film's costs in 24 hours, the mass production system will return, and with it the picture of quality. A month in Hollywood convinced me that the resources of talent are still there, that though much of it is being misused, a guaranteed market could put it decently to work again. Pay TV may provide that market. One hopes it will.

OLMI | E Venne un Uomo



Scenes from Olmi's life of Pope John XXIII, in which the Pope is not represented by an actor. Instead Rod Steiger (far right) plays a kind of mediator (interpreter, commentator and narrator) between the audience and the "Giornale dell'Anima", from which Olmi has drawn all his material.





FESTIVALS 65

BERLIN
MOSCOW
VENICE



"CHARULATA".

BERLIN

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT: with an immense effort of will, Berlin has pulled itself back into the top festival class. After the past disastrous two years, steps had to be taken; and they were. The number of films in competition was reduced, and the broadened selection committee exercised higher standards. An attempt was even made to include the Iron Curtain countries: nothing came of it, but at least the gesture was made. The result was that this year Berlin was better than Cannes. Wickedly, perhaps, SIGHT AND SOUND already covered some of the films when they were shown privately at Cannes (*Thomas l'Imposteur*, *Paris vu par . . .*); *Repulsion* and *Le Bonheur* have already been seen in London, *Cat Ballou* and *Alphaville* are reviewed on another page. So the following report concentrates mainly on the two Indian films: Ray's *Charulata*, and James Ivory's *Shakespeare Wallah*.

Many Anglo-Saxons tend to become defensive when confronted with the general French disdain for the films of Satyajit Ray. Withdrawing behind murmurs of "humanism," we concede that our taste is perhaps old-fashioned. And yet, it is astonishing that none of the Mac-Mahonists or further-out *Cahiers* writers have yet discovered Ray—on their own terms. After all, just as much as Losey or Walsh, Ray's technique of film-making is that basic classical style which relies on the straightforward filming of performances. Is not his a *cinéma du regard*, too? Does not his camera penetrate the soul of his characters just as much as, say, Preminger's? Does he not, like Hawks, place his camera "at the height of a

man's eyes"? I only mention this interpretation because so many people at Berlin were apologising for liking *Charulata*; they felt they could not appreciate both it and *Alphaville* without appearing to be guilty of critical schizophrenia.

Based on a Tagore novel, *Charulata* is set in the past: the year is 1880 and the setting is the upper-class Bengali milieu nourished by English liberal ideas, but profoundly marked by the old traditions. Shot through with litanies to Macaulay, Gladstone, and Shakespeare, spattered with English words, *Charulata* concerns a girl married to an English-language newspaper editor/publisher. Her husband neglects her for politics; when his sensitive, more literary-minded cousin Amal arrives, Charulata turns to him for understanding.

Charulata is distinguished by a degree of technical invention that one hasn't encountered before in Ray's films. There are still the typical and treasurable scenes that he does so well. A leaf-shadowed garden in the heat of the afternoon; from beyond the walls comes a vague murmur of life outside; the girl in the swing, the man lying beside her on the grass, her singing punctuated at rhythmical intervals by the creaking of the taut rope: the enchanted garden, Eden. And, in fact, the snake is not far off, for *Charulata* is beginning to fall despairingly in love with Amal. But there are other, more unusual sequences: we are introduced to Charulata wandering listlessly around the house, until suddenly, galvanised by a tiny hope of excitement, she tracks down a passer-by with field-glasses. And with great fluidity and skill the camera tracks her moving from window to window, from shutter to shutter.

All the same, it is not for his technique that one admires

Ray so much: no enumeration of gems of *mise en scène* would convey the richness of characterisation and that breathless grace and radiance he manages to draw from his actors (Madhabi Mukherjee as Charulata and Soumitra Chatterjee as Amal: both superb). So one is left—for all the world like one more Mac-Mahonist—gasping inarticulately: beauty, tenderness, lyricism.

The real surprise of the festival was James Ivory's **Shakespeare Wallah**. Ivory is a young American living in India (he has already made one film, *The Householder*, soon to be released in England), and *Shakespeare Wallah* came to Berlin under the protecting wing of Satyajit Ray. As a matter of fact, when Ivory showed the rough cut of the film to Ray, he was so impressed that he offered to write the music for it. The offer was accepted. One sees why Ray liked the film; without being derivative, it has the same miraculous mixture of humour and pathos, the same Chekovian atmosphere. *Shakespeare Wallah*, however, is almost entirely spoken in English; for it concerns the fortunes of a troupe of English Shakespeare actors who even now, twenty years after Independence, still wander over India giving their performance of *Antony and Cleopatra* to schools, golf clubs, and cultured down-at-heel Maharajahs. The troupe actually exists—the Buckingham Players—and many of the actors in the film belong to the company.

Like Ray, Ivory is at his best with his female characters: young Lizzie, the ingenue of the troupe (Felicity Kendal) and Manjula (Madhur Jaffrey), an ineffably Indian movie star and Lizzie's rival. Both are in love with a young Indian playboy, Sanju, who doesn't really want to let himself be tied down by either girl. Inevitably, Lizzie ends up by going to England (where she has never been); her parents, all ties cut, will finish out their lives between Simla and Delhi, playing in ever seedier theatres, a symbol, perhaps, of the end of empire. The pathos of their situation is all the more telling for their imperfect awareness of it.

But *Shakespeare Wallah* is not all sitting upon the ground and telling sad tales. Again like Ray, Ivory has a delightful sense of humour, evident in the portrait of the Indian movie star with her high-handed ways (whenever the director suggests she might try doing a scene slightly differently, she inevitably barks to her maid—"Pack up!"). The tea-party sequence in which she tries to get Lizzie to keep her hands off Sanju irresistibly reminds one of the famous scene in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. All in all, I think we've got ourselves a new director.

A festival, however, is not only for masterpieces: four other films demand attention. Bo Widerberg's new film *Love 65* I found obnoxious and tiresome, but obviously it was a work to show. A film about a director who is unable to make a film, it contains some hilarious near-parody scenes: in particular a long-held close-up of a vegetable bowl with Ben Carruthers and the director's wife endlessly cutting up tomatoes and cucumbers while chatting—in English—about how much they admired Lelia Goldoni in *Shadows*, and "What is she doing now? In television in London, is she; well, that's very nice," etc. Every fifteen minutes we have some lovely scenes of kite-flying, which I imagine is supposed to represent the director's aspirations. Well, as the late Cole Porter might have said to Mr. Widerberg, "Flying so high/with some kite/in the sky/is my idea/of nothing to do/I don't get a kick out of you."

The Danish film *Two* by Kjaerulff-Schmidt showed a marked advance on his earlier *Weekend*. It is still the story about the fellow who can't hold down a job, and his girl friend who is torn between her desire for him and the other respectable young man who wants to marry her, but it is agreeably acted and freshly conceived. Rodolfo Kuhn's *The Idol*, on the other hand, seems to me less successful than his earlier *Jovenes Viejos*. A satire on the fabrication of pop idols, it has some very funny Felliniesque sequences (TV contests; a benefit for the mentally retarded, shots of the singer intercut with the cretins), but suffers from Kuhn's occasional gaucheries and frequent inability to know when enough is enough.

A more important film for me was *Nicht Versöhnt*, a first feature directed by a young French refugee from conscription who now lives in the Federal Republic. Based on a Heinrich

Böll novel (like that other German avant-garde film of a few years ago, *Bread of our Early Years*), this is a study of Nazism both before and after the war. The narrative technique is cyclical, as perhaps befits the study of a recurring problem in German life; and although a shade hard to follow at times, it is extremely effective. Jean-Marie Straub, the director, would seem to be a disciple of Bresson, for his style of filming is extremely austere, formal, and hieratic. The actors, too, speak in that unemotional intonation Bresson loves so much; and it was this more than anything else that infuriated the German critics. Straub's only defenders seemed to be the French, the leader of what is called disparagingly by the Germans the "aesthetic left-wing," and myself. I hope the film gets a wider showing. The last I heard, though, was that the publisher of the Böll novel, who had given Straub the rights to the book on spec, had ordered him to destroy the print.

RICHARD ROUD

MOSCOW

THE MOSCOW FILM FESTIVAL, it has to be said, suffers from the disastrous failing of putting hospitality before discrimination. The organisers proudly announced that this year more than fifty countries had entered films (and most of these, Muscovite generosity being what it is, were sent off with prizes). Inevitably the bulk of these were (to be generous) mediocre; inevitably the general mediocrity obscured individual merits, overshadowed the agreeable and unusually efficient organisation of the festival as a whole, and sent one home vaguely irritated and depressed.

The only film that could honestly be said to afford any kind of exhilaration, and the only possible candidate for the Grand Prix, was *War and Peace*. (The *ex aequo* coupling with Zoltan Fabbri's quite unmemorable *Twenty Hours* was an incomprehensible whim on the part of the Jury.) Russian reception of the film was rather unexpected. Bondarchuk's shooting had received extensive and enthusiastic advance publicity. Yet despite this (or perhaps, in a way, because of it), even before anyone had seen the film people were tending to question Bondarchuk's competence to bring Tolstoy to the screen. And when the film was finally shown in the festival, sophisticated Russians were almost unanimous in their disapproval. The fact is all the stranger in view both of the characteristic Soviet chauvinism towards their own achievements and of the quite

"SHAKESPEARE WALLAH".





"WAR AND PEACE": LUDMILLA SAVELIEVA.

warm reception which Vidor's *War and Peace* received here. The complaint is that Tolstoy's epic is diminished, and of course it is. It would be impossible adequately to adapt any work as complex and complete; and where the American version attempted merely a narrative simplification, a sort of Tales from Tolstoy, Bondarchuk has settled to provide illustrations to the text rather than an interpretation proper. The test is that one often needs to be fairly familiar with the book in order perfectly to follow the film.

The illustrations, all the same, are magnificent. The spectacle is practically incomparable. The armies at Austerlitz stretch as far as the eye can see. The smoke rolls to the horizons and through it men and horses appear as figures in a gigantic nightmare. Civil locations—Leningrad and old provincial Russian palaces—provide panoramas no less grandiose. And at the same time human and intimate details are kept in focus. Austerlitz is latrines and cookhouses and scared or brave individuals as well as heroic battlescapes; and in the glittering ball scene we never lose sight of the tiny, hopeful, fearful figure of Natasha (enchantingly played by Ludmilla Savelieva). The people and scenes are interdependent: there is never the feeling of watching actors in fancy dress and period settings.

Technically the film is practically impeccable (a minor but disproportionately irritating defect is the hairdressing). Bondarchuk devoted exceptional time and thought to casting, and the actors and the roles seem inseparable. Tikhonov is an ideal Volkonsky, indicating in every word and gesture his onerous heritage. Bondarchuk himself is Bezukhov, and it is the sort of sensitive, expressive performance that goes far to compensate for what has been sacrificed of the original text. Among the film's other merits must be reckoned Anatoli Petritski's superlative colour photography, the musical score by a new composer, Viacheslav Duchinnikov, and Bondarchuk's vivid use of sound, from the roar of rifle-fire (realistically deafening) to the languid dribble of a fountain in an aristocratic drawing-room. In the end, however, much as one is stirred by the physical excitements of this monumental film (the festival saw only the first two parts; the film will eventually consist of four parts and run for something like eight hours), one must to some extent agree with the Russians. It is a triumph of resources and patient application rather than of a sustained poetic and creative approach.

* * *

Taken as a whole, Western entries were a ragbag—inconsequential oddities like Ciampi's *Le Ciel sur la Tête* and Sucksdorff's *My Home in Copacabana* shouldering commercial nondescripts like De Sica's *Marriage Italian Style* and Gérard Oury's *Le Corniaud*. Hopes of Zurlini's *La Soldatesse* were dashed: the story of a group of prostitutes in the charge of Italian soldiers of varying shades of Fascism, it is conventional in treatment and character, subscribing meekly to commonplace myths about the inner vulnerability of prostitutes and

their possibilities of spiritual chastity. John Schlesinger's *Darling* was well received; one felt that the Russian audience was able at one and the same time to feel virtuous in the face of Western decadence and to enjoy, vicariously, the fruits of that decadence. There was a rather embarrassing non-incident, when the *Darling* representatives in Moscow accused the festival organisation of cuts which turned out to have been made in London by the film's American distributor.

If little more accomplished, taken individually, Eastern European entries were at least more interesting as affording fairly consistent and coherent evidence of ideas currently occupying Communist film-makers. Two problems seem dominant. One is the belated acknowledgment of the potential difficulties of adjusting individual and socialist state one to another; the other—clearly a major problem of current socialist morale—is the necessity of keeping the younger generation from becoming complacent in their heritage of comparative material well-being, and from producing a socialist bourgeoisie. This second concern, I feel, explains a change of emphasis in Eastern European war films, for instance, whose aim nowadays seems to be to keep present in the minds of the young the price their parents paid. The Yugoslav *Prometheus of Vichavitsa Island* (directed by Vatroslav Mimica, whom we know best for brilliant animated shorts) touches on both these issues in its story of a man grown middle-aged and weary who is forced to recall his youthful struggles to impose a socialist system upon a reactionary island community. The Hungarian *Twenty Hours* is primarily concerned with the first problem. Rather vaguely referring to the 1956 Revolution in telling of the difficulties of a village in the decade after the liberation, its novelty lies in admitting the possibilities of factions within the party, of good Communists and bad Communists, bureaucrats and compromisers. Its fatal weakness—an indecisiveness in its conclusions and inconsistencies in characterisation—seems to come from the reluctance of the director, Zoltan Fabbri, to make an entirely unambiguous statement.

In matters of technique the younger Eastern artists still cannot contain their evident admiration for Western contemporaries. The Yugoslav and Hungarian films both employ excessively elaborate flashback structures and *montages* of still photographs, while the Bulgarian entry *Marriage Licence* rather weirdly combines a *cinéma vérité* prologue with more traditional narrative techniques.

And, festival apart, what about Russia? If it is an interesting place to visit, it is still more fascinating to revisit; and every tourist must always report (because it is always true) that goods and clothes and thinking and talk are that little bit nearer than last time to Western styles and standards. And so on. What is more interesting is the effect on Soviet art of the shedding of inhibitions, the increasing freedom to criticise that has been achieved by setting up Stalin as a unique national institution, a universal whipping-boy who may with impunity be blamed for anything that is, has been, or may be wrong. The theatre is an example of this emancipation, revelling as it is in the rediscovery of Meyerhold. Ten years ago Meyerhold (arrested in 1939, he died three years later) did not exist even as a name. Five years ago he was already, if dubiously, restored to official history. Now, a tragic thirty years too late, he is all the rage, and there are interesting productions of Brecht, of an adaptation of *Ten Days That Shook the World*—even of *West Side Story*—all done more or less *à la Meyerhold*.

The Soviet cinema, deeply conscious of its responsibilities to a mass audience, has yet to explore such formal experiment, but there is an evident feeling of freedom in the choice and treatment of themes. There are nevertheless still pockets of resistance. A Sovexportfilm official refused to show foreign journalists at the festival *I Am Twenty Years Old* (a film which was released only after two years hold-up because of its picture of a Soviet youth as aimless and bored). "When you are a guest," he said, "you may be shown the drawing-room. It would be very impolite to ask to see the bedrooms too." The Russian facility for coining instant proverbs can be maddening.

DAVID ROBINSON

VENICE

PRIMA DONNA OF THIS year's festival was undoubtedly Fellini's *Giulietta degli Spiriti*, which for two weeks played a game of now-you-see-me-now-you-don't, and in the end never turned up at all. The Maestro, equally undoubtedly, was Dreyer, whose *Gertrud* towered with majestic quietude over everything else, in or out of competition. Prizes for plain badness could be shared *ex aequo* by Arthur Penn's *Mickey One* (Americanised Kafka, ridden with hysteria and stuffed with symbols) and Carné's *Trois Chambres à Manhattan* (a plodding love affair between two glum French exiles in a New York of back projections and studio sets).

All in all, though, this was a good and lively festival, with a handsome crop of films *maudits*. *Gertrud*, for instance, received a standing ovation, and a backwash of insults from those who could see no further than its surface. Visconti's *Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa*, derided by the Italian critics, is another love affair with a decadent society as glowingly beautiful as *The Leopard*, though in black and white this time, which warrants close attention when it arrives in London in a subtitled version. And *Pierrot le Fou*, even more generally detested, was hailed as the final collapse of the Godard balloon.

At the risk of being called an irredeemable Godard-maniac, I would suggest that *Pierrot le Fou* is in fact yet another important step forward in his work, an even more rigorous analysis of the impossibility today of making positive statements. The story is simple enough, returning to *A Bout de Souffle* and *Le Petit Soldat* for a tale of a young man (Belmondo) who runs away to the Riviera with a girl (Karina) who is mysteriously tied up with a gang of murderous gun-runners and who in the end betrays him, absconding with the loot and leaving him to paint his face blue, tie two rolls of dynamite sticks round his head, and blow himself to pieces. What seems to have thrown people is the film's choppy, wayward surface, which is not the neat fragmentation of *Une Femme Mariée* but a real patchwork, like the pop art which has obviously served as pattern.

The narrative, for instance, is sometimes revealed not only in fragments but in reverse. Before the flight to the Riviera, a corpse with scissors embedded in its neck is casually revealed lying on a bed in the apartment to which Karina has just taken Belmondo, and is ignored by both. A little later Karina says "I'll explain"; but the explanation is heard as a commentary spoken alternately in fragmented sentences by both Karina and Belmondo—"J'ai connu des gens"—"Une histoire compliquée"—"Partir en vitesse"—"Comme la guerre d'Algérie." And as in *Muriel*, we are shown flash shots of a revolver on the table, of a corpse, a poster, guns stacked against the wall. What we are given is the emotional impetus of the scene, and it isn't until much later that the narrative connections—between Karina, the scissors and the guns—become clear.

"Cinema," says Samuel Fuller making a laconic appearance in the film, "is like a battleground. Love. Hate. Action. Violence. Death. In one word, emotions." Godard's film is all those things, all at once, illustrating a modern world in a complex mess so desperate that it is difficult to make up one's mind whether the situation is tragic or comic. *Pierrot le Fou* is haunted by references to the war in Vietnam; but its horrors are represented on the one hand by Karina's moving monologue on the individual humanity of the 115 dead casually reported in a news communiqué, and on the other by the grotesque farce acted by American Belmondo ("Yeah!") and Vietcong Karina (gibbering in Oriental yellow-face) for the amusement of tourists.

The various strands of this film are so tightly interwoven that it would take more space than I have here to sort them out. For instance, it contains a rigorous examination of Godard's own work to date: scenes or moods from each of the earlier films are quoted or re-stated, and tested for their validity. It is also a probing examination of love and betrayal, obviously based on personal experience ("You speak to me with words," says Karina, "and I look at you with emotions"). It also happens to be very funny in Godard's best throwaway



"PIERROT LE FOU". AMERICAN BELMONDO AND VIETCONG KARINA.

style, and has superb colour photography by Coutard.

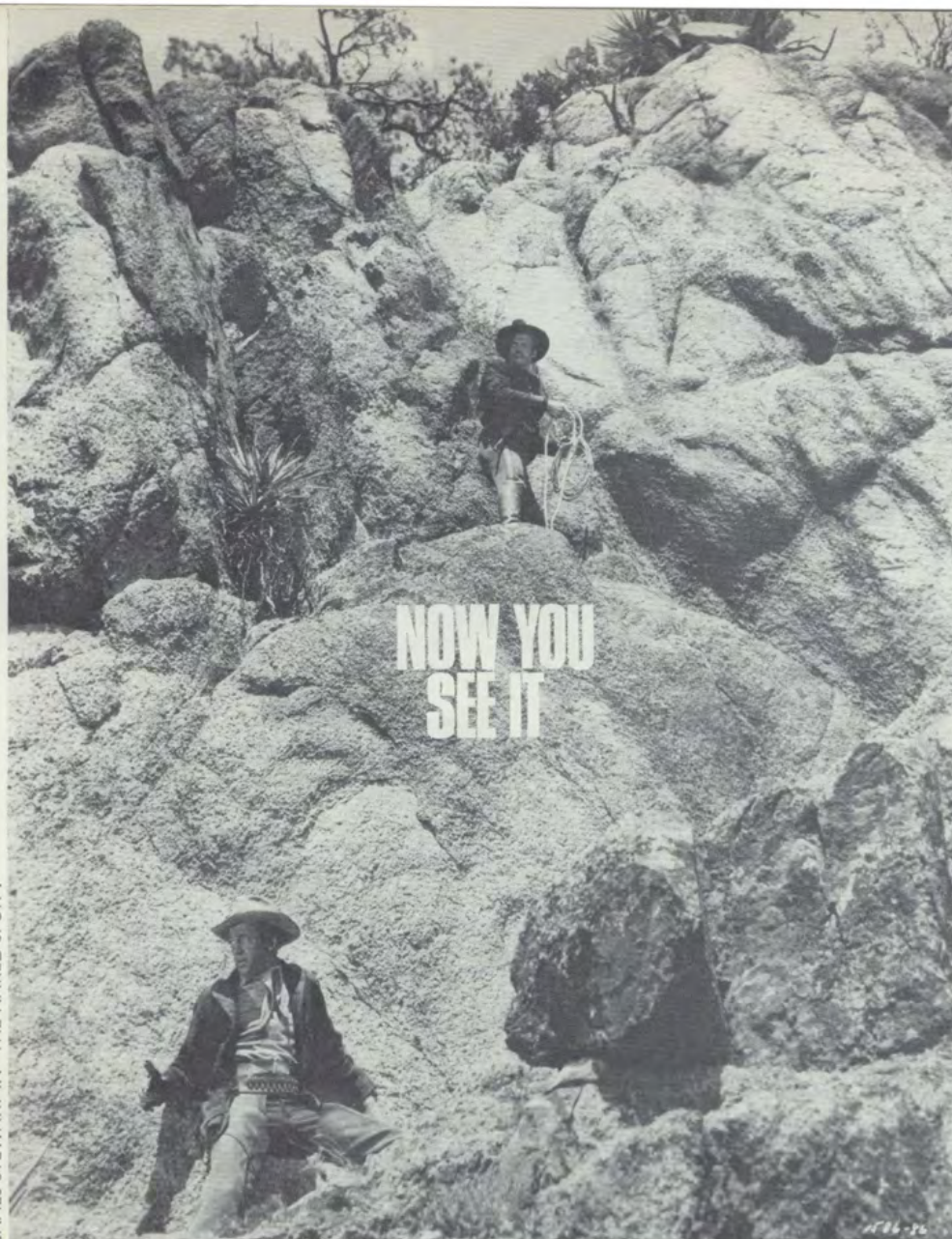
Moving from complexity to (deceptive) simplicity, Milos Forman's *A Blonde in Love* confirms the exceptionally engaging talent revealed last year by *Peter and Pavla*. Forman's characters seem to gaze at the world out of gently bemused eyes, always expecting the worst of other people, yet always provoking an equally gentle response. The whole of the first half of the film is a miraculously funny dance-hall sequence in which three moony soldiers ogle three nubile teenagers before tentatively introducing themselves by sending over a bottle of wine which, to their horror, is delivered to three sad wall-flowers at the next table. One of the girls is picked up by a young pianist and, on the verge of falling in love, they spend the night together. In the long, again very funny, final sequence, she goes to see the boy at his home, but her visit is hopelessly misconstrued by both the boy and his parents. Much of Forman's charm comes from his realisation of the essential shyness of human beings: desperately anxious to discover each other but reluctant to display their emotions, his characters live in a private world where their feelings are clear only to themselves, and cause confusion when someone else tries to match them. In the dingy bedroom where he and the girl spend the night, the young pianist tries to explain his confused feelings of excitement and reverence: "Some women are shaped like a guitar . . . you're more like a Picasso guitar." "What's Picasso?" she inevitably asks.

Like Olmi, Forman never pushes, allowing his characters ample time to make up their minds what they feel, but there is very little of this Olmi in *E Venne un Uomo*, which finally adds

(Continued on page 207)

"A BLONDE IN LOVE": HANA BREJCHOVA.





LANDSCAPE AND ANTHONY MANN

J. H. Fenwick and
Jonathan Green-Armytage

ANTHONY MANN IS AN EXTREMELY competent story-teller and puts a great deal of emphasis on plot: the tightness of his early thrillers and Westerns reveals it. Most of his films also contain fragments which evoke an intense response: servicemen listening to Glenn Miller's band in a hangar in *The Glenn Miller Story*, the wild rush for free land in *Cimarron*, the opening, indeed a great deal of the first half of *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, moments stay in the mind even when the overall impact of the film has been negligible. Some of his films do stand as integrated works, and satisfy accordingly. Why then should so many of them tend to fall apart at the seams, and the magnificence of the isolated moment become more important than anything else? It is puzzling and frustrating for a Mann admirer, and the chance of an interview while he was in England was not to be missed. The rationale which follows the interview was composed after the event, and Mr. Mann is not to be blamed for any of its arguments or opinions.

Interview

You once said that the most important element of a film was its story. Do you still hold to that?

ANTHONY MANN: Yes, I would still say the story is primary.

And what do you particularly look for in a story?

Probably most essentially a story of people who start out to do something and do it. Not failure stories. People don't like to see things that are down—most people are down anyway. They want to see an achievement, so that they can feel they could have done it. I mean, Hamlet is the most

reluctant hero ever, but if he hadn't killed his uncle the story wouldn't have been a success. If Christ hadn't risen there would have been no story. A play like *Macbeth*, a completely defeatist play, has never been a popular success. It's the driving force, I think, that people like to participate in.

Every time I deviate from this pattern the film doesn't reach as many people. I've done pictures without this theme, like *The Furies*. It had marvellous characters, interesting notices, but it failed because nobody in it cared about anything—they were all rudderless, rootless, and haters.

Any other qualities you look for?

Well, a film above everything else is visual, and therefore if you're going to tell a story, instead of telling an intellectual story—which of necessity requires a tremendous number of words—you should pick one that has great pictorial qualities to start with.

How much do you yourself have to do with the writing?

Oh, for instance, on this one (*The Heroes of Telemark*), we had the book, *Skis Against the Atom*, and another book, *But For These Men*, and got a war film from Colonel Wilson. Out of these materials we started formulating a story, then we went to Norway, and everything for the story was there. I saw the visual possibilities. I would say that I went to Rjukan and looked at the whole place and picked locations because of the pictorialness of it. You keep elaborating and collaborating and eventually the place brings ideas to you that aren't in the scenario. Films above everything else are pictures and you ground them pictorially. I don't believe in talk, not for films. That's for the theatre. Here you see it.

On *El Cid* I went to Spain, I loved Spain, I thought I'd like

to do a picture about Spain. Then I read the chronicles, and that was the greatest ending I'd ever read—I had to do it. *Fall of the Roman Empire* is a little more tough. It has a defeatist theme. I was very conscious that I might be stepping into a hole in doing this, because I just don't think people are interested in defeat. We tried to have a theme of victory, and the words are about victory, but the pictures the people see are of defeat, and the pictures won out.

You like a simple story?

The simpler and more primitive the story the better, yes.

Would you ever make a complex story?

I would fight it. I might eventually find myself involved in a film that was complicated, but I would fight it.

And the writing gets done after you have seen the locations?

It depends on what the picture is. For *El Cid* I drove all over Spain, and after finding the places we could write the scenes, because I could tell what sort of scenes they would be. On *God's Little Acre* I had the story and then I had to find the setting. They threw us out of Georgia—thought we were going to smirch the fair name of the South—but at least I had seen what Georgia was like. Then we recreated the scene.

This point about the driving force bringing up certain moral issues. Do you ever try to bring these issues out?

No, not necessarily, I don't. . . I'm interested in drama, and therefore I try to use whatever is effective dramatically. The juxtaposition of good against evil is of course in every drama, no matter how we slice it, in some form or another.

But you don't stress the issues?

Not as moral issues, I'm sorry to say, I don't think so. No. I don't think we're here to preach. I don't think we're here to sermonise or moralise—or even socialise. I think we're here to . . . All I know is that when I see something great, for instance when I saw John Barrymore's *Hamlet*, probably the greatest *Hamlet* I've ever seen, and I've seen about fifteen, I came out of the theatre feeling like God. He made me feel and reach heights. *Hamlet* in itself has some moral issues but it's not really a moral play, it's a very immoral play. But this thrilled me, this gave me—I soared to places I had never seen before and felt things I had never felt before. This is what I try to do. I don't try to bring out moral issues.

On Heroes of Telemark you're doing mostly location shooting first. Do you always work like this?

I much prefer to do locations first. Then the actors and everybody else get the feeling of the location and what it does for them: they have to climb a mountain and they're out of breath, and it's not a phoney out-of-breath, because they're out of breath. They're cold—they wrap themselves around with things because it is cold and not just make believe that it's cold. So everybody knows what the elements are like, whether it's rain, sleet, hail, snow, sunshine, heat, and so forth.

What, to you, is the main purpose of location shooting?

Well, the use of the location is to enhance the characters who are involved in it, because somebody who is really minor in feelings and minor as an actor can become tremendous once he's set against a tremendously pictorial background. The great value of using locations is that it enhances everything: it enhances the story; it enhances the very action and the acting. I'll never show a piece of scenery, a gorge, a chasm, without an actor in it.

What sort of visual excitement do you think audiences react to most?

There are so many that it's difficult to go into a discussion on it. The very fact that people love to look at vastness, and look at places they have never been and see incredible beauty or incredible horror—this stimulates the eye and therefore it stimulates the senses.

Do you like working on a big set like the Forum set in Fall of the Roman Empire?

In some respects yes, in some respects no. The problem with a set like that, of course, is that you have to fill it. Because of this it becomes a matter of mass movements instead of an individual movement; and the individual movement is more difficult to make in a huge set like that than a mass movement. It's fascinating to use masses, but you don't always want to. So in the Forum scene at the end of the

picture, when Stephen Boyd and Christopher Plummer duel to the death, I finally surrounded the action with shields and made a small arena—an intimate arena where two men would fight to the end—so that the whole of the enormous Forum set could now be forgotten and you were only interested in what was behind the shields.

When you are working with a set designer, what do you ask for from a set?

In *The Heroes of Telemark*, for instance, we have a very important scene where the uncle is brutally killed by the Nazis, so I designed the set with this key scene in mind. For the rest of the action I needed a kitchen, I needed a living-room, I needed a fireplace and so forth, but for this scene I also needed a certain kind of entrance so that the Germans would tear into the place, so that you could see the outside, the hallway, the living-room, and a gun on a beam, all in one shot, so that the man stood with his gun and the Nazis could not see it. This was why I designed the set this particular way, because this was the action that was the most essential for it. This is really what you look for, the key scene, then you build the set around it.

Do you have any definite principles in your use of colour?

Well, of course, God makes so much colour, makes such magnificent things, that it's difficult not to capture what He has if you go out on locations. I'll never forget how I woke up one morning and there was a misty fog over the whole of Valencia. It was around eleven o'clock in the morning, this white mist was all over the town, you could just see the outline of the walled city, and I yelled at Heston, "Look, I'll never capture this again. Put on this armour and ride with a white horse across the sands and across the ocean right across this scene." And in ten minutes we got it. I'd never have done it except that I saw it, it was there. *You see it*: for instance the moment when *El Cid* came out strapped on his horse with his shining

"THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE".





DEATH OF THE UNCLE (MICHAEL REDGRAVE) IN "THE HEROES OF TELEMAR". THE SET WAS PLANNED FOR THIS KEY SCENE.

armour and his white horse—I was lying on the sand looking up at the big arch and the mosque, I was looking up, and a rider passed, it wasn't even Heston, it was no one, just an extra. Well, he passed in his armour and as he came out of the shadow into the light his armour shone. I yelled to Bob Krasker, "Look at it, that's what we want, that's God, that's the sun, we have to get the sun on us." It was about twelve thirty and at this moment at twelve thirty we were shining Mr. Heston's armour and we let him ride out, and by God that was how he shone and there was no spotlight or anything; it just happened to be the moment when the sun hit it and it was so white it was electrifying.

You compose your landscape-and-figure shots with extreme care. Do you have any particular principles in your selection of landscape compositions?

It all depends on what you are doing. You look for them, of course, and you keep on looking, and you are always amazed at what you can find. This is the director's art, it's what he sees, and nobody else sees it like him, because every one of us is different and each one of us would see it differently. We see it through our own eyes and through our own feelings of blood and energies and all our experience. This is the exciting thing, when you are able to capture what you saw on film because you have a great cameraman. Not all cameramen can see what you can see, and not all cameramen can capture what you can feel.

Do you have any particular preference for any camera set-ups?
Again, it depends on the story you're telling. Wasn't it Lubitsch who said there are a thousand ways to point a camera but really only one? You can't find it in every shot, that's for sure. If you can find it fifty per cent of the time you're very lucky; but if you do find it then the scene immediately plays. If it doesn't play, it's not only the writing, because the writing can easily be changed, but it's the set up of the cameras, their juxtaposition to the actors. This becomes an individual thing. It's a measure of your personality.

APART FROM MANN'S EMPHASIS on drama and narrative, the hallmark of his work seems to be a conscious reliance on his location. His sensitivity to all the sensual properties of nature and landscape leads to an immense opening up of the scale of his films whenever these properties become important to the narrative. He established himself as a maker of tightly knit, semi-documentary thrillers like *T Men* and *Raw Deal*; but it is in his Westerns, and especially in the second, *Winchester 73*, that he begins to reveal his quality.

A great deal can be credited both to the scriptwriter and to the star who worked regularly with him on this group of films during the early Fifties. Borden Chase is probably one of the best writers of Westerns there is, and James Stewart is easily

a strong enough actor to hang a film on. There are other things, however, which can be more clearly credited to Mann. He does not rely, in his Westerns, on liberal undercurrents and interesting cutting. Nor does he draw attention to camera movement for effect. The extra qualities in a Mann picture are usually within the frame. It is here that his emphasis on the dramatic is most valuable. His narrative simplifications and his liking to concentrate the elements of the drama into one shot are very well suited to the Western and particularly noticeable in *Winchester 73*. The two contests between hero and villain, which respectively open and close the film, show Mann at his best as a dramatic craftsman. He never clutters his action with detail, but each object that is later to be of narrative importance he carefully plants as an integrated and colourful part of an earlier shot. This can be overdone, as it is for example with the shots of apples on the tables in the first half of *Fall of the Roman Empire*. In the Westerns, however, it is fluently woven into the action, and the simplicity of manner is highly suited to the terser conventions.

This liking for a concentration of narrative elements into one shot has a further effect. It means that Mann uses depth shots, and sometimes deep focus, purely to enable objects to be seen. This is a much more casual use than is normal: other directors tend to be self-conscious about such shots and reserve them for atmosphere and deliberately heightened moments. Mann does not deal very much in atmosphere, and his tough straightforwardness has the shock of purity.

It is in the later Westerns that landscape takes on an importance that continues into the more recent epics. In the plots of *Where the River Bends* and *The Far Country*, a large part of the drama comes from the settlers' battle against the land and the elements; and Mann's feeling for the structure of the setting shows itself. In *Where the River Bends*, filmed on and around Mount Hood, a key moment in the plot and in the development of the Stewart character comes when Stewart is abandoned on the mountainside, his horse taken along with the stores he was trying to convey across the mountains. There is a brief shot of Stewart, with his saddle, on the shoulder of the mountain, the figure in the middle foreground and behind it an oval-shaped snowfield and a high horizon. In *The Far Country*, similarly, two crucial moments in the revelation and development of the hero come first when he (Stewart again), standing in the foreground, watches a trek of settlers moving across a snowy plain towards a pass in the mountains, knowing the danger of avalanche but refusing to become involved; second, when he and his partner are caught in the dip of a river and shot down from a commanding position on the bank. In each of these scenes the quality of the landscape adds incalculably to the situation, not because of its beauty but because of its properties in relation to the man or men in it. One understands what this sort of land means and therefore what the character must be facing and feeling.

This is true whether the natural scene is vast or intimate. Mann appreciates and uses qualities inherent in landscape the way a sniper might. He sees the possibilities of the smallest detail. In the river shooting already mentioned, Stewart and his partner are loading their raft to make an escape. They are surrounded by high banks which emphasise their concealment and isolation. The river, which is their escape route, is bright blue and flows quickly behind them. Suddenly they are attacked: the high banks have also helped the enemy and trap the two men, the water is no longer an escape route but cuts them off from a fighting retreat—it is a classic ambush location. In *The Naked Spur*, the shape of small areas of rock surface is closely explored in the action, so that, for example, small puddles or the slightest of gradients become important, and there is a lavish expenditure of camera set-ups in treating the resulting movements. For the ambush sequence in *El Cid*, the land is only just uneven enough to conceal the enemy, so when Mann reveals them it comes as a surprise that they could be there.

Mann's technique seems to be not to over-emphasise a location's qualities, but to let them speak for themselves. There is no pathetic fallacy, nor equally any ironic inversions of the pathetic fallacy. Rocks don't "frown", shadows don't

"loom," blue skies don't "mock." The scene is complete in itself, and when a character encroaches on it what comes from the land depends on the man. In the same way, when vast scenes are used, we are not given landscapes which are views in themselves. With a figure in them they become breathtaking, but without the characters many of the settings would be comparatively dull to look at. It is the figure which gives the composition vitality, and the character who suddenly forces a relevance out of the setting.

With a director of Mann's type, who refuses to impose a "personality" on a film through his style, the impression which an audience takes away obviously depends to a very great extent on the production values of the individual film, and their suitability to the director's strong points. This is probably why the Westerns were such a success and why the films in the latter part of the Fifties disappointed; and it perhaps also accounts for the uneven quality of the epics. In *El Cid*, in spite of some extremely banal dialogue, the film flows well. The fact that the story concentrates on a single character suits Mann's taste for simple drama. Apart from the performance of Geraldine Page, for which Mann can scarcely be credited, the characterisation is unremarkable, but the acting is adequate and the photography superb. And so, too, is the use of the land.

From the first quiet pans over castle, plain and incredible pink sky, Mann uses the country to give the story its proper scale. He uses the sea coast as a setting for the Moslem invaders, closely identifying them with this scene, so that their intrusion into the fields and rocky tracks later in the film comes as a visual shock. For the tourney the horizon is long and flat, and apart from the stands for the spectators, unpeopled. The great sweep of dry plain highlights the sense of the hugeness of Spain. Throughout, the flat horizons, the gently dipping diagonals of the land, the clear, very vacant light, make Spain seem strangely huge and sparsely inhabited, so that each sudden outcrop of buildings is a small outpost of humanity, cut off and virtually unknown to the others. In spite of the poverty of the dialogue, the sense of the wonder of rumour and legend that precedes the Cid on his banishment becomes believable; the social structure to which a castle fortress is essential becomes clear; and the oasis quality of the convent to which the Cid's family retreats is felt. The high point of this use of the country comes, of course, in the final battles along the beach, to which Mann referred.

The Fall of the Roman Empire is more difficult, and not only for the reasons which Mr. Mann gave. Apart from one or two (admittedly important) exceptions, the casting is better than that of *El Cid*; the sets, especially the fortress of the first half, are extremely good, and the photography again beautiful. The music is an annoyance, but comparatively unimportant, and the story is workable. Unfortunately the story does not bear working in the way Mann works it, so that after the first half the film dwindles away. This seems to be because the first half is built up of certain components which his emphasis on personal drama then scatters. While we are on the northern frontier things jell. The toughness at the heart of the empire-building is accentuated by Mann's sensitivity to and emphasis upon the continual fight with the conditions: the fortress and the way in which it is seen at work shows the machinery of that military empire; the statuesque presence of Loren reminds one of what Rome can offer in grace and richness; and above all the performance of Guinness as Marcus Aurelius, especially in the parade of kings, shows us the dedication and civilising power of that empire. Because of these components, the great forest which faces the fortress also works upon the action. One knows that this is where the barbarians are hidden, and the power of the natural set reinforces the sense of the struggle which Rome faces. So when Plummer, drunk, totters above the panorama, or others regard it in contemplation, one can understand what they feel they are confronting. Yet, breaking this cumulative effect disastrously, the same location is used as a casual background to a "dramatic" chariot race. All other considerations are set aside for the isolated impact of the moment, and the story line is not one which can afford that approach. It stands by its larger implications: isolating the characters for the duel scene seems symptomatic of the mistakes made in the film.

Mann is too instinctive a worker to be predictable, and his talents too separate for any possible speculation about their future use. It certainly seems that he still could bring out films more satisfying even than his Westerns, films which combine the virtues of the epics and the strengths of his earlier movies. But this seems to depend very much on the sureness with which he chooses his stories. Too much of a dramatist to override weaknesses in the plot, too much of a believer in simplicity to handle a very ambitious subject, Mann's future work, like his location shooting, seems very much in the hands of God.

SUN, SAND AND ARMOUR IN "EL CID".



Macbeth into **THRONE OF BLOOD**



J. BLUMENTHAL

AKIRA KUROSAWA'S *THRONE OF BLOOD* (1957) is the only work, to my knowledge, that has ever completely succeeded in transforming a play of Shakespeare's into a film. What is important about this is that the film is a masterpiece in its own right, and the first of its kind. Up to now, Shakespeare adaptations for the screen have been perpetrated (this is the only word for it) mainly by those whose first love is the theatre. Maybe this is the way it has to be. Maybe *Throne of Blood* is an aberration, and truly gifted film-makers will always try to liberate themselves from the dreaded literary media so that they can concentrate on culling their own experience for film material. I guess it is even possible to argue that Shakespeare adaptations for the screen should be left to artists such as Olivier, so that they can bring the great soliloquies and reconstructions of the Globe Theatre to the provinces; for this, too, is an important function of the film. But then, who is to say where film-makers such as Kurosawa (as opposed to men of the theatre) should seek inspiration—especially when they succeed in turning out great films?

As easy as it may be to film a play, it is quite another thing to make a film out of one. Orson Welles, who has shown a genius for both media, is a good case in point. He has tried making films out of two of Shakespeare's plays and has failed—miserably with *Macbeth*, gracefully with *Othello*—both times. His *Othello*, beautiful as it is, fails because most of its cinematic flourishes are gratuitous. His toying with the medium remains toying for all its mastery. Welles is too often guilty of serving up chunks of pure Shakespeare that have been sugar-coated with an unusual camera angle or composition, or nicely sliced up by a bold cut. Although this is all very fascinating to look at, the experience of looking is empty at the centre. It is film as hobby, or ornament, but not as expression.¹ No matter from what angle one photographs it, or the number of cute little pieces into which one cuts it, the material in its original form (the play, the individual scene with dialogue intact) remains essentially what it was. In such cases the filming is a more or less gratuitous decoration of the subject and not what it must be: an inevitable articulation of it.

The Forest

THIS TAKES US TO *THRONE OF BLOOD*. At the same time, it takes us to Kurosawa's profound commitment to creating meaning by the manipulation of material reality. No doubt this is for him just as much an involuntary response to experience as it is a commitment; but whatever its sources, the form it takes in this film is revealing. To begin with, Kurosawa is doing much more here than simply letting us see the things that Shakespeare's characters describe, and the places where the action is set. This time-honoured but very limited device for filming plays is far from his only resource.² The point is that Kurosawa actually thinks by manipulating material reality. Birnam Wood, for example, which has only a few lines of vague description devoted to it in the play, becomes in Kurosawa's hands a physical presence that is potent enough to embody the film's very complex network of themes. The forest in *Throne of Blood* was born with Kurosawa's conception of the film. It is not the result of a makeshift adaptation, nor is it even a fancy visualisation of the play. It is rather an offspring of the metamorphosis from play to film, and it is to a great degree responsible for charging *Throne of Blood* with an inner principle of motion, for making it an autonomous work of art.

It might help to look at the problem from Kurosawa's point of view. He feels deeply sympathetic to the theme of *Macbeth* and is moved to make a film out of it. The play is about a noble and highly ambitious warrior faced with the dire task of gaining control over his own vivid but treacherous

imagination. He needs to prove himself to himself and can do so only by acting out his most horrible visions, wholly embracing whatever evil he encounters in his own soul. Self-control and self-destruction soon become identical, and this is the tragedy. As Kurosawa must have seen it, the crucial problem was to find a natural means of externalising, of objectifying, Macbeth's thoughts. By "natural" I mean that the object chosen had to appear to exist in the real world just as Macbeth did, living and growing there. For it is not enough that Macbeth's thoughts can be photographed; photographing them must bring them to life.

Birnam Wood, a marginal symbol from the original work, was perfect for the part. Even in the play, it is only when the forest defies the laws of nature (just as Macbeth subverts the moral order) that Macbeth's fate becomes explicit and he realises that the kind of self-control he sought was suicidal. In the film, however, the forest is more than a marginal objective correlative of the theme. It is both the battleground where the conflict rages and the very incitement to conflict. If this sounds like a fair description of what is called the "world" of a work of art, we are on the point. For this is precisely the role that the forest plays. It is the life at the centre of the film, what we always look for but seldom find in film versions of anyone's plays.

A sizeable portion of *Throne of Blood* is devoted to the terrifying spectacle of Washizu (Macbeth) waging war on the forest. In an extended sequence near the beginning he and Miki (Banquo) thunder through a dense, murky forest on horses no less frightened than they. (The forest is referred to as "The Labyrinth" and much is made, here and later in the film, of the difficulty of finding one's way out of it.) Washizu is clearly the leader: *he* will find a way out, for he cannot bear the sense of dread and helplessness he feels before the blind paths, the unidentifiable shrieks and moans, the thunder, lightning, and fog. He starts at what he thinks an evil spirit, unsheathes his sword, and letting out a blood-curdling cry, half defiant and half hysterical, he plunges into the dark with Miki following him. The reality of this forest is overwhelming. It breathes, and sweats, and twitches, and speaks in the unknown tongue. It is easily as powerful a presence as Washizu himself; and this is exactly what it must be, since for Washizu this first encounter with the forest is nothing less than a headlong plunge into the self.

In this sequence Washizu and Miki are on their way to Forest Castle, where their lord is waiting to reward them for leading the victorious battle against the rebel forces. Control of this castle soon becomes Washizu's obsession, and already he is struck by the thought that one would be truly invulnerable if he could control the forest, which is the only means of access to the castle. In a moment the crazed horses burst through the underbrush on to a small clearing that glows with an unholy light. Here, surrounded by heaps of carcasses and bones, a chalk-white, sexless, ageless demon sits spinning a loom and chanting the prophecies that eventually drive Washizu on to the ultimate dare. "I must paint the forest with blood!" he will cry. The forest is Washizu's mind. As his ambitions reveal, it is no longer controlled by his lord. His lord is therefore vulnerable, but no more so than the doomed Washizu, whose position is ironically similar.

Kurosawa has at least this much in common with most other great film-makers: his ability to imbue a place with such deep moral meaning that the place often seems to take charge and structure the narrative on its own. I am not suggesting that the place equals the film. It is simply necessary that the place come alive and help shape the film. If it generates no conflict, if it does not partake of the reality of the characters' experiences, place remains meaningless. And if the place is meaningless, so is the film. A very, painful example of this

failing is the painted-backdrop universe of Olivier's *Henry V*. It is as if a novelist had tried to preserve *The Ring of the Niebelungen* by objectively reporting all the action, characters, dialogue, and scenery exactly as they appear on the stage. And then concluded his lark with a request that we actually read his work.

In *Throne of Blood*, however, place becomes an autonomous reality. The horses gallop through the forest and Kurosawa, always behind a maze of gnarled trunks and barren branches, gallops with them.³ The whole—the men and their horses, the composition of the frame, the narrative, and the theme itself—is galvanised by the hellish milieu. This applies equally to the interiors, whose simple theatricality constitutes a world within that of the all-encompassing forest. Behind the flimsy walls man makes to seal himself off from an amoral nature, there is a lucid, quiet geometry that is assaulted throughout the film and, in the end, shattered. Toward the end, before the forest moves, a futile war council between Washizu and his captains is thrown into confusion by a flock of squealing bats which suddenly comes flapping into the hall from the forest. Washizu understands only too well what this means. He screams for his horse (*à la* Richard III) and rides for the last time to that unholy clearing seeking the assurances he could not obtain from others. The forest, which is the objectification of Washizu's mind, both controls and contains the action of the film.

Finally, there are the tumultuous comings and goings of the men and their horses which function so importantly as the narrative link between castle and forest. They enable the director to tell his story with great economy and force and deserve a little section to themselves.

The Horses

I AM REMINDED HERE of those two sleepy creatures who might conceivably have served as the drunken chamberlains but were forced instead to labour as mounts for Macbeth and Banquo at the beginning of Welles' film on the subject. Not that Welles should have made Kurosawa's film, but we do have some right to expect that a flair for phantasmagoria will show up in more than flashy editing and pretentiously symbolic sets—in the life surrounding the characters, for example.

ROSS

*And Duncan's horses—a thing most strange and certain—
Beauteous, and swift, the minions of their race,
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would
Make war with mankind.*

OLD MAN

'Tis said, they eat each other.

I grant that the old man's footnote would present problems. Ross's description, though, is the work of an excellent scenarist, and one whose talent Kurosawa did not fail to notice. From a lingering shot of Washizu and his wife retiring as the chaos loosed by the murder seems finally to have subsided, there is a jolting cut to the next morning, and we see the king's horses "contending 'gainst obedience," much as Duncan's did. The entire castle is aroused again as the horses, in their frantic rush to flee the thing they have sensed, stampede through a row of huge banners which flap resoundingly as they are dragged off towards the forest.

The sequence is typically Kurosawa in the calculated violence of its execution. All the action is shot from a worm's-eye view and up close; a few rapid-fire shots of the rebellious steeds and the stunned, helpless men and we move on immediately to the film's loose counterpart of Macduff, Noriashu, who is making off under cover of the excitement to warn Miki

of his suspicions. The narrative takes an important step forward and nothing is left hanging. The brief turmoil here is anything but a decorative cinematic effect. We already know from the forest sequence at the beginning that Kurosawa is modelling his world on that of Shakespeare. The whole of nature is sensitive to moral traumas in this type of world, and the moral traumas themselves are often of such magnitude as to unhinge the whole of nature. Kurosawa's great gift is that he has the power as a film-maker to make us experience this world. If he had tried to abstract from the process the thing that Shakespeare, working as a dramatist, did—if he had given us a reaction to the event instead of the event itself—everything would have been lost. We would have neither play nor film.

Let me give another telling example, one for which Kurosawa did not have Shakespeare's potential genius as a scenarist to serve as inspiration. (Isn't this, by the way, at the heart of the matter? That Kurosawa relies on Shakespeare only as a scenarist whose vision is consonant with his own, and never as a maker of pentameters?) Miki decides, because of the prophecies, to throw in his lot with Washizu even though he is certain of Washizu's guilt.⁴ He is now a guest at Washizu's new residence, Forest Castle. The sequence opens in Washizu's chamber, with Lady Washizu playing the role of evil counsellor. She does not trust Miki and knows that Washizu doesn't either, so she gives voice to what he desires yet dreads even to think of: another murder. We cut immediately from Washizu's speechless, petrified face to the courtyard, where Miki's horse, normally gentle, seems to be going mad. It is charging around the courtyard and refuses to let the groom saddle it. Miki's son interprets this as a bad omen and pleads with his father not to ride forth that afternoon but to stay for the banquet and tend to his affairs the next morning. Miki laughs this off as childishness, but no sooner does he move to saddle the horse himself than we cut to a shot of the courtyard taken from the ramparts of the castle. It is night, and still, and the courtyard, far away and off in the lower left-hand corner of the frame, is deserted. Miki's men are seated up here in a circle discussing in hushed tones the strange turn of events during the last few days. Suddenly they fall silent. They hear something in the distance. It becomes louder and finally identifies itself as the sound of a galloping horse. The shot is held a moment longer, just long enough for Miki's beautiful white stallion to come racing into the courtyard, riderless. The cut is to Washizu at the banquet. Washizu, of course, is paying no attention to the entertainment or his guests; he cannot stop gaping at the one empty seat in the hall.

This passage, which lasts no more than three or four minutes, is film narrative at its most eloquent. Kurosawa edits with an unerring instinct for clipping each action at its climax so that it will reverberate throughout the whole, and movement and placement within the frame are always obliquely at the service of the story. But the sequence is also noteworthy because it allows us to catch Kurosawa in the act of narrating what Shakespeare dramatised, and in doing so it reveals how greatly film narrative depends on the material components of the world being depicted.

Kurosawa builds the entire sequence around the reactions of Miki's horse. The movements of this short-circuited creature are responsible for all the characteristic ellipses in the narrative; they say everything that has to be said until Washizu's own body and face take over again at the banquet. At the same time, they necessitate doing away with much of the play. The elaborate preparations with the murderers, and even the murder itself (presumably excellent cinematic material), are discarded. Kurosawa has no use for even the

WASHIZU AND MIKI IN THE FOREST. TOP RIGHT: THE DEATH OF WASHIZU (TOSHIRO MIFUNE). RIGHT: THE WITCH'S HUT IN THE FOREST.



murder because the world he is creating already contains its own narrative potential. It is a world of morally sensitised objects (the forest, the horses, the bodies and faces of the characters) which throughout the film lead a life of their own. And in their autonomy they demand that the film-maker adhere to their logic. If the film-maker is really making a film, and not just filming a play, he is only too willing to accede.

All appearances to the contrary, I am not arguing for the horse-opera notion of film aesthetics. Silver, too, neighs when there is trouble in the air, but who hasn't had the urge to strike him mute? One does not need horses, or chases, or even the unleashing of stupendous natural forces whose mass can be hurtled across the screen, in order to make filmic films. One thing that is indispensable, though, is the ability to convince the spectator that the surfaces of body, face, and place, bristle with nerve-ends, and that the synapses between the three generate the meaning and control the structure of the film.⁵ Kurosawa does this again and again in *Throne of Blood*. I hope it is clear that what he does bears no relation to such things as Olivier's desperate attempt at the end of *Henry V* to add a dash of "cinema" to the recipe in the form of an equine extravaganza.

The Characters

PROBABLY THE MOST RADICAL result of this transformation from play to film is the total absence from the latter of Shakespeare's diction. That Kurosawa's characters in *Throne of Blood* speak Japanese is only half the point. The other and more important half is that they speak only when they can't communicate in any other way, and then in language that is terse, unadorned, brutally functional. As far as one can tell from the subtitles, Shakespeare's poetry is gone—not just translated and trimmed, but gone.⁶ In our discussion of the forest and the horses we saw some of the things that take its place. There it was best to concentrate on the fundamental similarity of the problems facing Macbeth and Washizu. But the film's scrupulous avoidance of Shakespeare's verse is closely related to some equally fundamental differences in plot and characterisation. These differences deserve attention because they take us deeper into the question of how character is developed in a film, and they may even provide some basis for a speculation on what types of character, if any, are most suitable to the medium.

LADY MACBETH

*I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me—
I would while it was smiling in my face
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.*

Such is the chilling eloquence that Shakespeare uses to build the character of Lady Macbeth. Lady Washizu, however, is denied this mode of self-expression. She is endowed instead with a purely physical power, one that reaches far beyond (although it includes) the immediately visible gesture. A short time before the action of the film opens, she conceives Washizu's child. This pregnancy becomes the pitchfork with which she goads her husband into carrying out his evil intentions, and she needs few words to exploit her advantage. The child, who was to have been the ultimate beneficiary of the plot to kill the king and Miki, becomes with Lady Washizu's miscarriage one of its victims, and by the same token an incarnation of the plot itself. After Washizu gains control of Forest Castle, Lady Washizu acts out this perverse fertility rite by dancing, insane with joy, in the room where the king was murdered. But the pressures of approaching failure soon bring on the miscarriage, which in turn precipitates Lady Washizu's nervous breakdown. (The cause of Lady Washizu's madness is one of Kurosawa's most brilliant additions to the story.) In the mad scene she simply huddles in the middle of her empty chamber, scrubbing her hands and whimpering. We neither see nor hear of her again.

Earlier I mentioned the hero's vivid but treacherous imagination. Yet one would be hard pressed to find much evidence of a vivid imagination in what he says. What we are given is a barrage of gapes, grunts, shrieks, and snorts; and the taut motions of a trapped but still powerful animal. Washizu cannot articulate his nightmarish visions, but there is no doubt that he has them. Some of this we encountered in his reaction to the forest. There is more. When Miki's ghost appears to him at the banquet—that it does appear is also germane to the question at hand—he staggers all the way across the hall and back, the spasmodic thudding of his feet threatening at any moment to splinter the thin wooden floor. The delicate Japanese architecture is used throughout as a sounding board for the man's tremendous violence. He crashes into the wall, gasping for breath, his eyes half out of their sockets. The banquet soon ends and one of the murderers reports that Miki's son has escaped. The stricken Washizu kills him on the spot without saying a word; he screams, flings the sword away, and reels out of the room. We are meant to feel here that the powers of the forest are assaulting the fragile order of interiors that are not really interiors at all, but merely veneer, flimsy defences against the bestiality within. Although the faculty of speech eludes him, this is what Washizu feels (and expresses) with every bone in his body.

We are never allowed to forget the hero's primitive physicality. When Washizu finally glimpses the forest moving, he shudders and crouches in a corner of the ramparts unable to believe his eyes. With great effort he musters the courage to try to embolden his men. Pacing the rampart like a caged lion, he roars down into the terrified crowd. (The camera is placed well beneath him here and pans unsteadily back and forth, imitating his nervous motion.) But his men have had enough. The forest has moved and this creature's doom screams at them with his every gesture, no matter how brazen. They draw their bows and turn them on their master, denying him the honour of dying, as Macbeth did, with "harness on his back." The result is gruesome, for it is some time before Washizu, howling and writhing, with dozens of arrows stuck in him, is caught in the neck.⁷ He falls (in slow motion) into the courtyard and his body, which seems as if it will never stop bouncing, raises huge clouds of dust. The entire army backs off, fearing that the demon may not have been completely exorcised. It has, though, and when the body finally comes to rest, the film ends.

* * *

It seems to me that the main consequence of these various transformations is that the grotesque *rapprochement* between the human and animal kingdoms common to both works is more complete in *Throne of Blood* than in *Macbeth*. Essentially the same thing happens to both heroes, but this could not have been expressed filmically unless Macbeth were transformed into a more instinctive, more physical, creature; one for whom the moral dimension of behaviour exists but seldom crosses the threshold of conceptualisation into verbal poetry, or into philosophy. Washizu is no less sensitive than Macbeth, and no less moral. But because there is no place in the film (in any film, for that matter) for Shakespeare's poetry, he must of course be less of a poet, and less of a philosopher, and perhaps not quite the classical tragic hero that Macbeth is in the play.

Even at the news of the miscarriage and at the sight of his deranged wife, even in his attempt at the end to rally his men, meanings for him remain locked in their physiological symptoms. Given Macbeth's eloquence, Washizu might have succeeded in dying more nobly, with "harness on his back." But this is to confuse the two characters. For Washizu's character is controlled in this important respect by the requirements of the medium. His men turn on him because his body and face, awesome as they are in this final attempt to command, cannot conceal his awareness of his imminent destruction. Washizu is simply not articulate enough to mediate, in the lofty manner of the classical tragic hero, between his perceptions and his gestures. If he were, he would not present the powerful film image that he does.⁸ It is fitting that Kurosawa should exploit this by placing him on the ramparts

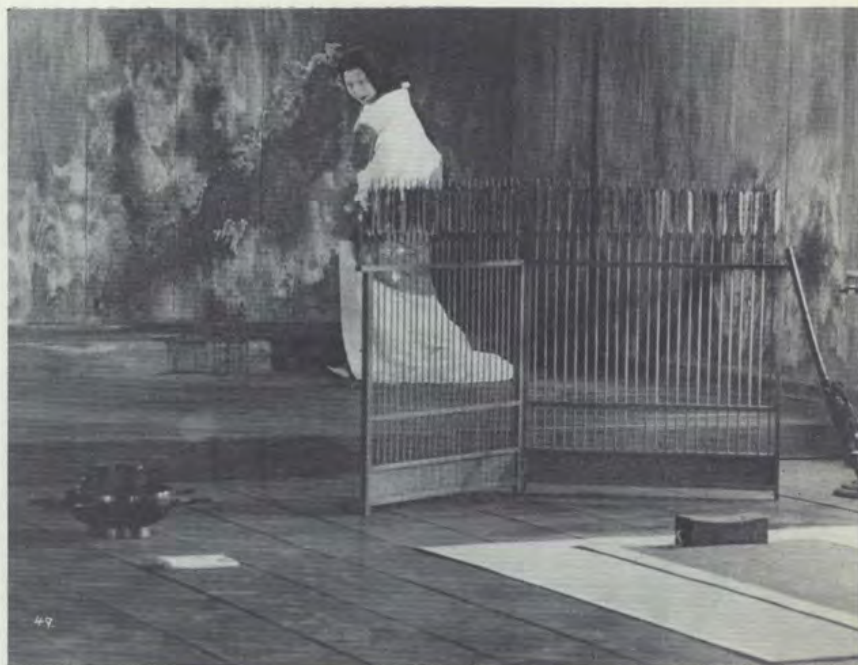
in full view of everyone and at the mercy of those to whom he cannot help but reveal himself.

All this is not to say that Washizu cannot think. The point is that he thinks in another medium. When Macbeth hears of his wife's death he delivers the famous speech beginning "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow . . ." Washizu, looking into his wife's chamber, sees part of the result of his folly huddled in the centre of the room; his whole being sags and he moves off heavily to his own chamber. We follow him there. He enters the room and lets his limp body drop to the floor. "Fool!" he cries. "Fool!" These are the only words he speaks. Occupying the frame with his seated figure, however, are two other objects: his sword, and the throne. Kurosawa holds this eloquent shot for a long time. It is as good an indication as any that Washizu is not a brutish man incapable of reflection. He is rather the spirit of Macbeth distilled to almost pure materiality. Lady Washizu is the spirit of Lady Macbeth distilled in the same fashion. These distillations are the lifeblood of the film. Without them a meaningful and moving narrative would have been impossible.⁹

As for the lesser characters, they receive much the same kind of treatment. Macduff (Noriashu) is an interesting example because in the process he loses not only his eloquence but also his glorious role as avenger. Although he is presumably among the forces attacking Forest Castle at the end, after he ineffectually warns Miki of his suspicions we never see him again. One result of this is that the effects of the central action on the body politic are not dwelt upon as they are in *Macbeth*. We may be thankful for the absence of all the tedious business between Macduff and the mealy-mouthed Malcolm, but we do demand that the social implications of the tragedy, which are integral, find some expression in the film. And this they find not in subtle political machinations, but in the monstrous betrayal that Washizu's men are forced to perform at the end. This is indeed a primal social situation. It can be seen (without stretching the point, I believe) as a re-enactment of the ritual replacement of the old king. In this the film seems even closer to the Dionysian roots of tragedy than the play; and seems also to descend, in its own way, just as deeply into the darker side of human nature and relationships. In his search for the surfaces he needed as a film-maker, Kurosawa had to chip some of the crust of civilisation off the drama. Macduff (and Malcolm) were part of that crust.

* * *

A final question arises. Are there certain types of character that are not really fit for film narrative? Let me venture into these deep waters with the speculation that no film-maker could help but grossly distort or over-simplify a character such as Hamlet's. I am not talking here about the problems that Olivier encountered in trying to preserve a theatrical performance of the role, but about those that would be



MACHIKO KYO AS LADY WASHIZU.

involved in trying to create the character filmically. And the problem is not Hamlet's complexity, for Macbeth, too, is a very complex character and Kurosawa was able to recreate him filmically by means of a distillation that neither distorted nor simplified the fundamental meaning of his experience. Hamlet would be untranslatable because of the verbliness of his experience. One can be verbal without one's experience being so. Macbeth, who is at bottom a man of action, is also a great poet, and therefore a good example of this. The verbal experience is typical of those who never wholly enter their experience, those who can only act at acting. It is typical of the theatrical, role-playing personality, which is *par excellence* Hamlet's. Macbeth, on the other hand, always lives his experiences, and thereby provides Kurosawa with the irreducible core of raw, unquestioned reality that is the first premise of most great films.

Polonius asks Hamlet what he is reading. "Words, words, words," Hamlet answers. A pun of this calibre should be able to withstand the strain of one more meaning. I submit it as a description of exactly the kind of self-conscious verbal construct that is the basic form of Hamlet's own character and experience. It is the theatre that has always nourished this sensibility and it seems therefore destined to remain outside the mainstream of film-making.¹⁰

NOTES:

1. The image of Iago caged and being returned to the castle, with which Welles frames the action of the film, and the brilliant sequence in the sewers, are among the exceptions to this.
2. As it is, for example, for Max Reinhardt (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1935), whose enchanted forest inhabited by real people, and whose cardboard castle, merely underscore the intractability of his material.
3. Kurosawa's imitators have succeeded in making a cliché of this image, but that is their problem.
4. The changes in the plot will be dealt with at greater length in the next section.
5. This sounds very much like Kracauer's definition of what a film should be (see his *Theory of Film*), but his notion of film as "the redemption of physical reality," dependent as it is on what he calls the "stream of life," would leave little room for *Throne of Blood*. He would probably have severe reservations about its tight plot and medieval setting.
6. In what I suppose is an attempt to be faithful to Shakespeare, a recent Russian film version of *Othello* went so far as to use English-speaking actors. This kind of piety is not one of Kurosawa's virtues.

7. Kurosawa had real arrows shot at the actor here. As Anderson and Richie point out in *The Japanese Film*, "His interest was not in using the real thing simply because it was real but that the effect on film was greatest when real arrows were really aimed at Mifune." The same might be said of the forest.
8. Even the sophisticated, terribly self-conscious characters in Antonioni's films are usually at a loss for words to express their plight (when they aren't too weary to do so). This verbal lethargy and frustration are important sources of the often tremendous impact of these figures as film images.
9. If this statement seems too strong, have a look at Judith Anderson's *Lady Macbeth* in George Schaefer's film version of the play. Shakespeare's diction was meant to be rendered theatrically—it cannot be rendered well any other way—and at this Miss Anderson is expert. On the screen, however, her excellent theatrical performance becomes operatic and therefore ludicrous. The film-maker who tries to preserve a theatrical experience ends up sacrificing the best virtues of both media.
10. In his recent book, *Metatheater*, Lionel Abel convincingly traces the modern theatrical sensibility ("life seen as a dream, the world as a stage") back to *Hamlet*. This sensibility has had very little influence on the great film-makers.

FILM REVIEWS

DARLING . . .

ONE DAY, SOMEONE is going to make a film about a model (or film star, or beauty queen) with a witty, daring and unconventional theme. The heroine will make a great deal of money; she will live playfully and extravagantly; she will marry even more money. The daring and unconventional aspect will be that she isn't noticeably corrupted by all this. But not yet. To suggest that it could be anything but terrible at the top is apparently more than flesh and blood can stand; and the thing that surprises me about a film like *Darling* (Warner-Pathé) is that people as thoroughly sophisticated as John Schlesinger and Frederic Raphael should accept the constrictions of so many flatly fashionable attitudes. *Darling* is sometimes clever, often ugly, always self-conscious. But its view of the world belongs to the corridors of Wardour Street. Its disillusionment looks like that of a gossip columnist who has left the party with a monumental hangover, but will still be back next day to see how all the awful people are contriving to amuse themselves.

Apart from star-struck adolescents, who aren't presumably the audience *Darling* has in mind for itself, I believe people in general take a cooler and more sceptical view of show business and advertising than it suits those involved in these trades to imagine. The great glamour image is an advertising man's four-colour illusion. To knock the props from under it, by showing the squalid, shabby, unhappy "reality" (or, again, half-truth) below the surface, is, in 1965, an act of daring mainly to those within the charmed circle. And to be disenchanted, in any case, one must first have surrendered to an enchantment.

Diana Scott, the film's heroine, is instantly and persuasively recognisable as a girl out of a headline story. She is attractive, gay, intelligent, selfish, destructive, and utterly unadapted to any situation that calls for staying-power and sustained interest. Her emotional reflexes are instant; her moral ones hardly exist. She can delude herself into really believing, for a moment, that she would like to live in a broken-down cottage; and end up as mistress of a supremely glum and stately Italian palazzo.

Julie Christie plays her up to the hilt; but unless the film were prepared to commit itself more thoroughly to its vulnerable heroine as a person, or to extend to her the kind of detached sympathy that Antonioni devoted to the deluded actress of *Signora senza Camelie*, the audience can hardly avoid sharing her discovery that the wages of sin is boredom. She earns her final unhappiness: the lonely Italian evening, in a world where the door of the trap is held open by a liveried manservant, that sends her hurtling back to London and a stern rejection by the man she likes to think she loves. But as a person she is static; we know her too well after an hour of film, and no better after two hours.

Around this character, not really strong enough to act as a reflecting agent, Schlesinger and Raphael construct their immensely jaundiced view of interlocking worlds. The art world: Dirk Bogarde (excellent as always) as interviewer for a *Monitor*-style programme; a sequence at a private view where everyone chatters about the artist's prison record and no one bothers with his paintings. The business world: Laurence Harvey as Miles, a monstrous poseur who takes Diana to *Dolce Vita* orgies in a Paris brothel, but won't open the office safe at her bidding to let her see the firm's papers. The social world, gorged and sated at a big charity party. The show-business world, playing out its own power game as the cold eyes appraise the market value of starlets. The holiday world, with Capri looking like Southend as the tired tourists shuffle around. The upper middle class world, of appearances being strenuously kept up at deadly dinner parties. And so, superficially, on.

Before the credits even begin, the film has summed itself up: the advertisement for Diana's life story goes up on a hoarding, obliterating the "War on Want" poster underneath. As a confrontation of opposites, this is elementary; as a cynical comment on what is, after all, the action of the film, it's dangerous. It invites one to speculate on the film-makers' own motives in parading their whole restless catalogue. It goes without saying that a good deal of *Darling* is clever, funny and spitefully accurate. The camera circles and jabs, and the shutter clicks on a freezing moment of self-disclosure. A tone of voice can hit off more than a whole scene, as in the episode when Miles takes Diana

back late at night to the towering glass palace where he works. "One has a key," he drawls, when she wonders how they are going to get in. "One would," she mutters. That about sums up Miles, almost killing the necessity for the scene that follows.

Surprisingly often, however, the film-makers leave one in doubt about just what value they intend to attach to a scene. The charity party, for instance, comes across as an over-charged exercise in malice. What disturbs one, though, is not the sight of the rich foregathering in the name of the poor, but of intelligent artists taking all this seriously enough to see it as a medium for valid satirical comment. Perhaps some modern Savonarola might just pull it off, on his own terms. But that is not the Schlesinger-Raphael method: they are far too knowing, with their snatches of effete dialogue (as in the hunt ball sequence of *Nothing But the Best*) juxtaposed with images of greed and self-satisfaction, like the lady at the roulette table delicately dismembering her sandwich. A vast photograph of the Queen taking the salute at the Trooping the Colour dominates the staircase. The audience provides its titter of acknowledgment. But how on earth, one wonders, did this bit of cinema foyer art get into such a house? The pay-off to the sequence finds Diana reading John of Gaunt's "This England" speech to a bumbling M.P., and meanwhile toying with a £10 gambling chip discovered in the depths of her chair. Whose England? One has the sense that a sitting duck has been wheeled laboriously into the target area.

A later scene, in which Diana and Malcolm, her homosexual photographer ally, go shoplifting at Fortnum's, is no easier to fathom. The camera tracks past the counters, with the shop assistants lined up like sentries: the feeling is that the film takes the shop as symbol (temple of middle-class greed, I suppose) with a seriousness I must say I find it hard to share. It is all shot with a certain self-conscious swagger, as though raiding Fortnum's were somehow quite different from raiding Woolworth's. A comment on the characters' own insecurity? One wonders, but one doesn't know. On occasion, this uncertainty in the tone of voice can become positively misleading. In one episode, Robert takes Diana on a trip to interview a famous novelist, a twinkling, smiling old man with what I took to be a typical line in jaded platitudes served up for the listening public. And then it appears that this is not the point: here, looming up, is the film's small symbol of integrity. These are not intended as platitudes, but truths . . .

One wouldn't want to seem to be pulling *Darling* back to a convention it is rejecting: that of finding excuses for people by wrapping them up in synthetic charm. Yet artistic taste (which hasn't, incidentally, much to do with good or bad taste in the standard sense) surely demands a certain respect for the characters created. There is a real sense here of the injuries people can inflict on each other, of the small, revealing meannesses and deceptions. The mistake, perhaps, was to mix this up with the vaguer satirical purpose, the auditions and footling TV commercials, the cheap horror films and the party chatter. One thing, certainly, sets the context for the other; but one is also being betrayed to the other. It is *Darling's* readiness to score off its own characters, to strip them simply to see what they look like stripped, that leaves the film with such a sour and splenetic after-taste.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

"DARLING . . ." JULIE CHRISTIE, DIRK BOGARDE.



YOYO

AFTER PIERRE ETAIX'S FIRST feature film, *Le Soupirant*, it was easy to write him off as a pale would-be follower in the footsteps of early Clair, and a lot of us did. Well, we were wrong. In his new film, *Yoyo* (Bargate), an extraordinary transformation has taken place. *Le Soupirant* seemed to aim at winning us over by its very modesty, its refusal to attempt anything beyond the charming miniature, the faint smile; and on this level, far more demanding and difficult to achieve than it seems, the film was never quite good enough, though constantly promising to be better than it actually was. *Yoyo*, on the other hand, goes to the other extreme. It is in many respects (though not, happily, in length) a big film, with large sets, lavish locations and hundreds of extras. It is also stylistically ambitious: in fact in general it suggests nothing more than a Jerry Lewis script directed by Fellini just after seeing *Now About These Women*.

Clearly this is a mixture which cannot hope to sneak by as too unassuming to rate harsh criticism. It demands to be judged by the highest standards, and, even more surprisingly, by those standards it does not fall far short of success. At every turn one fears the worst—some dreadful lapse into sentimentality or pretentiousness. And at every turn Etaix is one jump ahead, so that the worst, constantly impending, never quite happens.

The story is quickly told. A jaded aristocrat (shades of *The Navigator*) meets again his first love, now an equestrienne in a circus, and discovers she has had his child. When he loses all his money in the Depression he goes off with her and the boy to run a three-person travelling show. The boy grows up, becomes a great clown, spends most of his earnings on cleaning up and restoring his father's château, but then comes to realise that true happiness is to be found not in fame and riches but on the road with the simple circus girl he loves. Sounds revolting? Yes, it does rather, but the film is not at all like that. To begin with, there is Etaix's personality as a performer (he plays father and son): it is crisp, dry, and inimical to all easy pathos. Here, if anywhere, the comparison which has often been made between Etaix and Keaton holds up: they are both physically little men, and yet both as remote as one can imagine from the tearful stereotype the phrase conjures up. In other ways, though, there is little comparison, as presumably Etaix himself feels, since towards the end there is a significant moment at the reception when a photographer tries to get Yoyo to pose in an unmistakable Keaton hat and he brushes it aside. In fact, Etaix in this film is really not noticeably like anyone else. He is rather—a curious role for a comic—the still centre round which his creation as writer and director revolves.

This creation is always appealing, and often extraordinary. There are one or two dullish patches, especially the satire on television (which may be fresh in France but was done everywhere else ten years ago) and the depiction of Yoyo's life as a tycoon which follows it. But in general the procession of little sight gags is uninterrupted, and hardly any fall flat. The opening sequences, played as silent comedy with titles and extravagant sound effects, contain many gems, such as the senior Yoyo's idea of walking his dog by being driven slowly



"YOYO": PIERRE ETAIX.

round the forecourt of the château in his luxurious saloon with the animal on its lead trotting alongside, or the fantastic Bergmanesque strip routine by which his spat, boot and sock are removed. And once he, his beautiful equestrienne and their child get out on the road (by now talkies have come in, so that the silent bit does not have to be persisted in any longer than it proves useful), the gags are equally charming—sometimes very funny, like the way the dog disrupts a happy morning's planting for a couple of innocent bystanders, or the fetching 'quotation' from Fellini—and the pictorial grace and elegance with which they are presented is quite remarkable.

Indeed, many of the most pleasing things in the film are visual effects which are not really definable as gags at all. They are almost abstract gags, like the beginning of the road sequence, in which we see Yoyo senior's enormous black car backing inexplicably across a misty upland at dawn, and just follow it back until its purpose in so doing is explained; or like the beautiful shot of the first circus cavalcade driving along the end of the formal pond at the château, exactly mirrored in its waters. *Yoyo*, in fact, for all its tributes to other directors, has a distinctive flavour, a curious brand of humour all its own, and marks the arrival of Pierre Etaix in the ranks of directors to be reckoned with.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

CAT BALLOU

MOST OF THE TIME it's funny, and some of the time it's sad, but the nice thing about *Cat Ballou* (BLC/Columbia) is that it isn't always quite sure which. Deposited from the boot of a stagecoach at his employers' feet in a disreputably drunken heap, the ageing Kid Shelleen (Lee Marvin) manfully winds himself up to give a demonstration of his legendary sharp-shooting, then suddenly stops in bewilderment—"No gun," he shamefacedly admits. And when young Catherine Ballou (Jane Fonda) commits the unpardonable gaffe of saying

out loud that she wouldn't have hired him if she had known, no one can bear to meet Shelleen's reproachful eye. The West and its heroes aren't what they were, and they, sadly, are as aware of it as anybody.

When Catherine picks Kid Shelleen's name out of a Western paperback and sends for him to protect her father from being gunned down because a development corporation wants his land, she conjures up a ghost from the old Wild West who returns to walk a strange land. "Nobody cares," he is told when he tries to get a drink by trading his guns for their sentimental value; the only excitement now, he grumbles, is that they are laying a roller-skating rink over the O.K. Corral; the outlaws' hideaway is peopled by tired old men who want to be left alone in peace ("Remember me?" asks one of them excitedly, but he too has forgotten), and a frail old lady still hopefully practising her art as a dance-hall hostess. The day of the gunfighter is over, just as much as it is for the Indian, except that the gunfighter hasn't been put into a reservation and taught basket-weaving.

Even so, myths die hard as long as there is belief, and Kid Shelleen responds to the faith in his legend which made Catherine seek him out. He pulls himself together, arrays himself once more in the glittering black and silver finery of the gunfighter, rides out like a knight errant on his white horse, and does battle with the dreaded tin-nosed gunman who killed Catherine's father. But as he goes upstairs to challenge Strawn, a middle-aged lady sings in the bar-room downstairs, "I'm old and grey, and I've lost my way/All my tomorrows were yesterdays." Times have changed, and legends cannot be revived: and when Shelleen returns to claim Catherine, full of his victory and recaptured glory, he finds himself instead taking a fatherly hand in expediting her marriage to a younger man, before relapsing again into drunkenness.

If one legend is destroyed, however, another rises to take its place: the gunfighter dies away, to be replaced by the gunshy. After her father's murder, Catherine becomes Cat Ballou, head of her own tiny gang, all of whom would be misfits in the old West, but are absolutely at home in the new, where guns don't go off so easily as

they did. "What do we do now?" is the constant cry of Cat and her gang when their victims refuse to be intimidated and insist on being shot. Cat herself is no Calamity Jane, but uses her big blue eyes to get her way; and the two young rustlers, Clay and Jed, are willing to wear their gun-belts for her, but believe that discretion is the better part of valour and don't hold with killing. "You are absolutely useless," says Cat. "You are absolutely right," replies Clay cheerfully; and so they fall in love.

The film's mocking, anti-heroic up-to-dateness is completed by the inclusion of an Indian, Jackson Two-Bears, as the last member of Cat's gang (apart from Kid Shelleen, who acts as a kind of drunken guardian angel to them all). "No call to dance with Jackson," says her father at the barn dance. "No call not to," says Cat, firmly sweeping into the dance, and of course Jackson becomes an unquestioned, fully-fledged member of the gang. But he is as cautious as Jed and Clay, for a different reason: Indians, he ruefully remarks, are still blamed for what happened to Custer.

There is so much to enjoy in *Cat Ballou*, especially the consistently inventive script and Lee Marvin's virtuoso performance, that it seems a little invidious to say that Elliot Silverstein's direction is not always as sure as it might be. The ballad interjections by Nat King Cole and Stubby Kaye are sometimes awkwardly handled, for instance, the rhythm tends to drop between sequences, and there is some clumsy back-projection, as well as an unnecessary use of speeded-up motion in a chase sequence. Better instead to end on some of the rarer pleasures: a beautifully choreographed barn dance, ending in a free fight from which Jackson Two-Bears emerges with the remnants of someone's wig, reverting momentarily to his scalping nature with a little whoop and war-dance; a bleary-eyed Shelleen bursting in on Cat as she mourns over her father in his coffin, gallantly responding by singing "Happy Birthday to You," and triumphantly blowing out the candles; and best of all, perhaps, a wonderfully weary shot of Shelleen and his horse propping up a wall, asleep, the horse with its front legs nonchalantly crossed, as they wait for the action to begin.

TOM MILNE

JOSEPH KILIAN

WE SEE AN OLD WOODEN DOOR, church-like, flanked by statues. The camera moves in, and there is a stone man, apparently bent under a burden, or pulling something, or protecting his head from a blow. Cut to a long-shot of a city crossroads. We hear a sound of rhythmic clapping, and across the intersection in different directions come successively, but as if telescoped together, a crocodile of children, an army battalion, and a funeral with horse-drawn hearse. This last deposits the white-suited protagonist of Pavel Juracek and Jan Schmidt's film (*Contemporary*), the young man who is looking for Joseph Kilian.

He enters the wooden door, and comes into what looks like the backstage of a theatre. Stacked against the walls are placards daubed with the crude images of propaganda—Uncle Sam falling off the world, a glutinous portrait of Stalin. The man comes into a small theatre or nightclub where two musicians are tuning up. He



"CAT BALLOU", LEE MARVIN AS KID SHELEEN.

asks if Kilian is around: he wants to tell him someone has died. No, replies the musician, he's not round here. "I don't understand," says the young man; and suddenly, through a series of frame-holds across Prague, we see him passing by cafés, shops, people in the street, all of whom are saying in one way or another that they don't understand either.

He finds himself outside a shop that rents cats. He enters and borrows one. When he gets home, there's a parcel from his mother, sending him food from the country, with a loving and anxious letter. Next day, he returns to the cat-lender's. It's vanished; the shop is empty, and none of the passers-by has ever heard of it. Worried and guilty about keeping the cat beyond the statutory loan period, the young man goes from office to office, trying to get them to validate his wish to return the cat in time. At home in his bed-sitter he feeds the cat. He has a dream in which he protests his innocence to the warder of an impressive wall of filing cabinets. "I don't even know why I borrowed a cat." Cut to the young man in another office, whose occupant tells him that this couldn't happen anywhere else—not in Brazil, for example, he says, standing in front of a picture of a snowscape. The occupant (a doctor? a friend? a psychiatrist?) rings for Kilian, but Kilian is gone.

Later, the young man enters the impressive foyer of a large building, and is told by the caretaker that he wants Room 72. He gets lost among corridors, whose only inhabitants are old men in shirtsleeves going about some business and, once, a man cycling down the narrow passage. Room 72 turns out to be a waiting room, already full of sullen-faced people. In comes a man carrying a large cylinder adorned with tubes, pipes and a shower nozzle, whom we've earlier seen sitting in a restaurant. He throws open the door to the inner office, which is totally empty, except for a telephone on the floor which suddenly rings. A voice at the other end is asking for Kilian... The group of people collect in the well of a staircase, looking upwards. With them, we see the man with the cylinder climbing each landing. But paradoxically, as he reaches

each level, he only reappears on the landing below. Eventually, he succeeds in reaching the level of the group of people. It is an uncanny effect of a man trying to climb a descending escalator.

With a terrible clatter, the man with the cylinder falls. The downfall echoes in the young man's head as he walks out in the city again, making his way to a crowded beer-house. His attention is drawn to a neighbour doing a crossword puzzle. "Quality which differentiates man from animal in nine letters," he asks his friend. "Reasoning," says the friend. "No," says the man, "Obedience." Convinced that this is at last Joseph Kilian, the young man comes across and asks him. But the answer is, "You must have made a mistake." Yet, when the crossword puzzle man gets up to leave, he too is carrying a cat. Fade out to white screen.

Juracek and Schmidt have made a perfectly controlled fable. Everything—rhythm, sound, editing—combines to give the film an elliptical poise that enlivens and quickens the bald summary of events I have given. What is refreshing is the assured sense of proportion about the film; every contrast of subjectivity and objectivity seems right, every magnification of sound is just to the right level, every use of telephoto to flatten and hollow the world seems justified. Even the basically sombre tone of alienation is constantly balanced by humour.

But the title (recalling Josef K.), the setting (Prague) and the plot (a quest through bureaucracy) force one to confront the comparison with Kafka. Yes, this is a film made beneath the sign of Kafka, with the same deceptive and troubling surface, the same slightly off-centre vision of the world. But Kafka's heritage has been widened, as it has been in so many East European countries today. The East European bureaucracy, as anyone who has tried to get a form stamped or a ticket issued will confirm, still has its Kafkaesque side: in this respect it differs little from the Austro-Hungarian system Kafka knew. But whereas 1920's Prague was a fragment of a declining empire with no coherent set of values, no vision of the future, Prague today is part of a system with a definite view of the world.

At many points, especially in the backstage-placard sequence, the film takes note of this. Yet its attitude seems to say: "The days of the heroic slogan and the street demonstration are over. In truth, someone, something has died. Prague is a city of *dialogues des sourds*. Kilian, the cure, the certainty, and the father-figure, is nowhere to be found." In this perspective, the man with the cylinder might be taken as the symbol of technology, which was perhaps believed in as a replacement for the old revolutionary certainties, but (as evidenced by the man's downfall) has proved to be no solution. Young Czechs are left in the situation of the young man at the end of the film: he hears clearly that reasoning (i.e. Marxism) has been replaced by obedience (State bureaucracy, the rule of the system), yet he is still trying to find Kilian. No, the film seems to say, you must break out of this pattern: the cat (spontaneity, a possible area of freedom) does not have to be handed back. Let it out of the bag, keep it for yourself, live.

If this reading is possible (and it is very much in line with the flavour of other recent works from East Europe, such as Lenica's films and Mrozek's plays and stories), *Joseph Kilian* is not merely an accomplished film: it is also a brave and hopeful one.

MICHAEL KUSTOW

TOKYO OLYMPIAD 1964

NEAR THE BEGINNING of Kon Ichikawa's film of the Tokyo Olympic Games (British Lion), a great iron builder's weight is seen crashing into a half-demolished building as the Olympic Stadium begins to grow. The tone is set: this is to be a film about violent physical activity; though not quite a hymn to straining muscles and national pride. Sport for me, Ichikawa seems to say, comprises graceful bodies in motion plus a kind of bizarre unnaturalness almost akin to vaudeville and the circus. And it is to Ichikawa's credit that he manages to alternate these concepts without any obvious changing of gears, looking at the events with a hundred camera eyes which seem like one, and always seeking the involving, close-up view.

Such is the sustained beauty of the filming that it is tempting to stop and make a catalogue of exceptional moments, or relish the way Ichikawa has made the torch carrying sequence seem 'directed' as in a story film, culminating in the great shot of planes weaving the Olympic emblem in a sky spattered with pigeons and with the symbolic flame blazing in the foreground. His unit seemed to have everything, notably a marvellous range of telephoto lenses; but all the technical know-how and equipment in the world need a master to control them, and a close look at individual sequences shows that Ichikawa's genius lies in the strict selectivity of the material. The aerial views of torchbearers and retinue rounding a mountainside, or a bird's eye run over the marathon track, are some of the most beautiful in all cinema, but there are only about half-a-dozen in all. Similarly, the pole gymnastics and swimming have one vertiginous overhead shot apiece, timed for the maximum plastic and dramatic effect. And, true to the great Japanese film tradition, Ichikawa is not afraid to take an event to pieces: thus, the women's hurdles are shown first at ordinary speed, then we flash-back to the preparations and see the whole

thing again in slow motion, shot from one set-up and silent except for a shattering percussive clap when a hurdle is knocked over.

Until we saw *Alone on the Pacific*, it was difficult to believe that Ichikawa's early career included satirical comedies and cartoons. Now, in the Olympics film, one somehow remembers Horie pottering about his little boat and coping as best he can. This is the same ironic, slightly lugubrious artist's eye which now watches the Russian weight throwers' rhythmic tics or the weight lifters' bulging veins as they drop their dreadful load, or photographs a rifle expert in such a way that gun and fleshy cheek momentarily take on the aspect of a surrealist landscape. Each viewer will find his own favourite bits of humorous observation: mine include the sudden vision of rows of bobbing American hats, and the Japanese girl who whistles nonchalantly and turns a careless somersault as she waits for something to happen.

Nearly thirty years separate the two great Olympics films (Berlin 1936 and Tokyo 1964); but the marked differences between the two extend beyond the mere fact that Ichikawa was able to draw on colour, wide-screen and technical resources unavailable to Riefenstahl. Visually, the films come closest together in the gymnastics and the marathon. Both record the former in fluid, brightly lit set-ups mainly from above and below (there is really little choice), and both are extremely beautiful. In the marathon, each director was lucky in having competitors who played up so manfully, like the moments when they pause at the little stands to choose their drinks (thus allowing Ichikawa to pinpoint those delightful coloured sponges being prepared by somewhat harassed Japanese officials). When Riefenstahl inserts her famous shots of piston-like legs surging forward to Herbert Windt's music, the effect is heroically larger than life; Ichikawa's key shot here is the long, relentless close-up of the Ethiopian winner's intently set features, drawing us irrevocably inwards to his lonely private thoughts.

Neither film cancels out the other: Riefenstahl's packs a greater voltage of excitement which can still set an audience cheering; Ichikawa's is simply more human without being mawkish, not least in the final

"JOSEPH KILIAN": KAREL VASICEK AND CAT.



parade where the swaying mass of competitors merges imperceptibly into the throng of spectators and one feels there is perhaps one world after all. At Cannes, Ichikawa ruefully reported the misgivings of the Japanese Olympics Committee, who would obviously have preferred a newsreel to an artist's personal view. "They even asked whether I could re-shoot some of it, but I was able to reply truthfully that circumstances prevented it." And how lucky for the cinema.

JOHN GILLET

HELP!

NEAR THE OPENING OF *HELP!* (United Artists), there is a sequence where we see the four Beatles walking up their separate paths to their four individual houses. It is an unassuming working-class street. The houses are the little two-storey red-brick affairs, all squeezed together in a row, that characterise the industrial suburbs of most British towns. Across the street from them, two middle-aged women are waving and commenting on their charms: "... just so natural. They're still the same as they was before. Adoration hasn't gone to their heads one jot." And so we have the exterior image of the Beatles—or at least a large part of it. But as the film moves on and we cut to inside, we see that these four little cottages have been completely transformed. They have been run together into one huge palatial corridor, filled with innumerable gadgets and automatic machines and even, for John Lennon, a sunken bed. It is a world of complete fantasy. It is the world of Richard Lester.

In this world of Richard Lester everything is possible. Whatever we might imagine in our wildest dreams, he can create for us on the screen. Do we ever feel heavy, dreary, fat, and dull? He will fabricate for us a world in which everything is light and gay, lissome and exciting. Above all, he will extract the magical from the drab. So in *A Hard Day's Night*, a gloomy baggage car is characteristically transformed by a number by the Beatles; so in *The Knack*, the necessity of wheeling a brass bedstead across London—an absurdly impossible journey topographically, by the way—becomes an excuse for a display of athletic high spirits. There is also in these films the sense that the truly marvellous life is the imaginative life within. Like the Beatles' cottages in *Help!*, in *The Knack* the deceptively dreary-looking red-brick suburban house serves only as a mask for the magical white room inside. Its telltale furniture exiled to the corridor, it is a room robbed of its normal dimensions by the dazzle of its light; a room where little zoo fantasies can playfully be enacted, animal-taming fantasies with just a hint—curious this!—that one of these animals might bite. But *The Knack* really only works on the level of an adolescent fantasy, as a kind of collective British suburban 8½. And implicit throughout the film is the assertion that everything can be jolly, gay, light-hearted, and good fun, if only we approach it with the appropriate panache.

So it's not surprising that Richard Lester should be the man for the Beatles and the Beatles the boys for him—the Beatles who more than anyone else have lent an enchantment to the sound of dreary Liverpool and who have, almost single-handed, created a new image abroad



BLACK AND WHITE ALPINE FANTASY IN "HELP!"

of youthful stylishness in Great Britain. The Beatles, MBE; Richard Lester, master conjuror. And certainly in *Help!*, the most wonderful transformations of reality occur.

Richard Lester's style is one of endless enterprise, of an apparently inexhaustible zaniness that can become wearying by the end. Well-trained in the techniques of his trade by making advertising films, he clearly takes pleasure in all the tricks of focus and exposure, in the strange effects a camera can achieve; and in *Help!* he has responded with great freshness to the possibilities of colour. Throughout the film, especially during the songs, he has striven to create a visual quality that is as thoughtless and carefree as the singing itself. Everything is light-hearted, everything is played for laughs. During the opening title number, while we watch the Beatles performing in slightly tinted black-and-white, brightly coloured darts and then the titles of the film are thrown on the screen; and in the most inventive sequence of the film, the one shot in the Alps, while we listen to their "She's got a Ticket to Ride" number, we watch bizarre images of them clowning about in the snow, all dressed in black, sometimes perched upon a grand piano isolated in the wilderness with a surrealist absurdity, sometimes skiing and tumbling about with the kind of quick-cutting and trick effects that we associate with the Keystone Cops. But these visual gags, successful though they are, are really imposed upon the music. The kids of all ages throughout the world do not laugh when they are listening to the Beatles. These fans are more moved than that.

For there is about the Beatles a kind of purity of appeal, a winning simplicity of manner, that is in the long run oddly served by all these antics on the screen. It is a characteristic of the film, as it was of *The Knack* and of all but the canal sequence in *A Hard Day's Night*, that it never slows down. It never allows any one image more than a few seconds on the screen. Even the Beatles themselves are not allowed to exist as individuals. Gone is the attempt, granted at least to Ringo in *A Hard Day's Night*, to permit some sense of their individual personalities to emerge. The camera cuts back and forth from one Beatle to the next as if to guarantee them their collective

anonymity. John Lennon's rather special contribution to their first film has been submerged by the directorial choppiness; and occasionally we catch glimpses of George Harrison's face with a kind of quizzical expression about it, as if he realises that they could perhaps be doing something different from just larking about.

What is the effect of all this endless running and jumping, this refusal to stand still? Up to a point, it seems an attempt to render in visual terms some of the energy of the Beatles' music; but beyond that point, it would seem to betray a fear that we might perhaps get to know what they are like in some detrimental way, that they might make some kind of appeal different from the interminable androgynous charm which now seems to have been such a large part of their success. For like the characters in *The Knack*, the Beatles inhabit that no-man's-land of adolescent get-with-it-ness, that formerly awkward age which exists between sexual awareness and sexual experience, but which can now seem such a ball if we bring to it the right kind of style and a determination not-to-be-square. Like Little Orphan Annie or Pinky and Perky, like any comic-strip character or children's television hero, it could be commercially disastrous if the Beatles were allowed to change and grow up, if Paul McCartney should have actually reached out for one of the bikinied mock-guitars that magically appear for the evening beach sequence in *Help!*, or if he had revealed that he was prepared to receive from Eleanor Bron something more incriminating than a wink.

Needless to say, if the Beatles themselves are atomised, none of the other characters is allowed to exist at all. It would seem irrelevant to complain that all the Bondishness of the non-Beatle moments is banal in the extreme; but we could regret that the established talents of Leo McKern, Eleanor Bron, and Victor Spinetti are so little used. Perhaps only the large-jowled befuddled persona of Roy Kinnear succeeds in coming across with nice effect, as he fiddles incompetently with his variety of British plugs and laments that his love of animals hasn't led him to devote his life to vivisection.

Finally, for me personally, beneath all the assertive gaiety of this enterprising film,

there is a sadness—a sadness that is the result of a lack of trust in how the Beatles really are, and in their ability to create their own effect instead of having everything contrived for them by the techniques of the film. Again like *The Knack*, like the too-clever advertisement that finally undermines the product it is trying to sell, the film seems to be nudging us too hard, to be urging us too insistently to get-with-it, at all costs, to be crazy, cool, superficial and detached. For in England, there is a scarcity of hipsters though there are plenty of mods—young people for whom an acceptable surface style has become the governing factor of their existence. It is both the excitement and achievement, if at the same time the present limitation of Richard Lester, that he, although American, has so successfully understood this new British modishness and has transferred its surface qualities with such inventiveness to the screen.

PETER HARCOURT

LE BONHEUR

WHEN RESNAIS OR GODARD use a series of fragmented shots, they do it with a purpose that is visually cumulative; the whole sequence will stand for more than any one or two of its parts; style and content are inextricably linked. To understand this particular technique is already so natural that one can scarcely believe one's eyes when one finds it used quite meaninglessly by Agnès Varda in *Le Bonheur* (Gala). Here fragmentation is simply a method of varying the presentation of a series of pretty pictures. It is style for style's sake; a symptom of all that is wrong with Varda's picture.

Le Bonheur is about the happiness of a carpenter, François, with his wife and two children; and also with his mistress who marries him when his wife is drowned, or (assuming the most rational motivation) drowns herself rather than accept the triangular situation. The carpenter and his family are played by Jean-Claude Drouot and his family: a real family to represent a make-believe one, and in fact, with every shot, reality recedes a little further from

Varda's grasp. The film begins and ends with a picnic (picnics or making love or both are François's characteristic ways of being happy), and the very first scene is shot to extract, at least to some extent, a drooling response. (One has, for instance, the children sleeping and then, no time later, as the family heads for home, the remark "The little ones are tired.") To be honest, one has also Jacques Demy's kind of sweetness, and the colour is almost as good as that of *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*; but behind it all there is the music of Mozart, an embarrassment of riches that, despite effective moments, rather suggests that for this purpose Michel Legrand might have been much better. The kind of happiness that one associates with a composer like Mozart has something just a little cerebral about it, which brings us to the worst aspect of Agnès Varda's film: the feeling that it is a kind of intellectual slumming.

Just as a picturesque shot of a shower of wood shavings precedes the first glimpse of the carpenter at work and sums up his happiness there, so everything in the film is exactly what it seems at first glance. These are simple people, Varda seems to be saying, who experience only simple pleasures. But the only reality that any artist can present convincingly is the reality within himself. Varda, who has somehow suppressed her sense of humour sufficiently to take a fool like François seriously, is so intent on reconstructing the appearance of happiness that the spirit of it has eluded her completely. Ironically enough, professional actors, instead of Drouot's family, might have lessened the air of artificiality. As it is, the film's best and most convincing scenes are those involving Marie-France Boyer as Drouot's attractive mistress—not perhaps what Varda expected or intended, but worth something as a reminder of her perceptive way with people. If one admired *Cléo de 5 à 7* less, one might have been prepared to like *Le Bonheur* more.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?

THE TROUBLE WITH WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT? (United Artists) is that there are too many ways of finishing this opening phrase. The trouble is that the script peters out. The trouble is that it's grossly self-indulgent. The trouble is that the actors are all having their private ball. The trouble is that everyone strains continually to be way out. But finally the trouble is that it's simply too ordinary. A script that is promisingly jaded, actors that know how to tic, Clive Donner directing, a Bacharach score, and yet the end result isn't anything new at all. It looks like Blake Edwards camping it up psychiatrically.

This needn't have been the case, but the film seems very much the product of several conflicting aims and attitudes. There is a strange script by Woody Allen, with lots of broken threads and without a centre, full of funny, worryingly penetrating scenes, and with the sort of over-cultivated characters who wouldn't be alive if they hadn't read about it somewhere. There is a vestigial story line: Peter O'Toole and Romy Schneider in a relationship stalemated by O'Toole's fatally successful Don Juanism. It is a promising starting point, but the plot never moves forward. Instead more and more zany detail is thrown in

whenever the interest is about to flag. The interest still flags; and O'Toole and Schneider, with nowhere to go, look lost.

With the focus of the film concentrated on fragmentary scenes and hit-and-run impact, the single line and the bit player become overwhelmingly important. Woody Allen's lines are often clever, but more often they're quirky, needing room to expand which they are never given. The minor players, on the other hand, are exactly right—so right that they become the film's main attraction. Their business every now and again takes on the higher lunacy towards which presumably the whole picture aspires. Peter Sellers' overwhelmingly comfortable and sympathetic personality dominates, as always, but Capucine and Paula Prentiss are each responsible for some of the best scenes in the movie. Capucine's poised nymphomaniac, hurriedly but competently covering her traces, and Paula Prentiss's suicidal stripper, in Paris on a "bongo scholarship," hint at where the film might have gone if Donner had had the self-discipline of these two actresses.

To be fair to Donner, the film does go quite a long way—in fragments. Two things above all account for one's disappointment. The first is the pace, which is forced without being controlled. The second is the quite unforgivable ending, another in the long line of chases with which every big budget comedy now seems to end. This one is so casually motivated, so full of pointless detail, and so carelessly put together, that it makes the finales of *Mad, Mad World*, *Sex and the Single Girl* and *A Shot in the Dark* look like miracles of timing and invention. One can only assume that by this time the hysteria of the audience is intended to have reached a point where anything goes. It hasn't and it doesn't.

What's New Pussycat? is certainly very well decorated, in neurotic art nouveau. The accessories are all nineteen-sixties dated, the only streamlined thing in the film being Ursula Andress. This decadent greenhouse languor in the backgrounds emphasises the twitchiness of characters and action. The direction is often equally unsettling. It is nervous and allusive, right from the opening sequence, which oddly combines establishment long shots and harshly sudden jump cuts, quickly drawing in Tashlin-type sight gags and suggestions

"WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?": PAULA PRENTISS, ROMY SCHNEIDER.



of *Une Femme Mariée*. This continual shifting of tone, the Goonish verbal humour, the understatement of many points, combined with a battering overstatement of others, builds up a frenetic worry which never completely disappears. But the jagged edges and screaming nerves don't win out; the film, without gaining the full Blake Edwards gloss, is finally too pretty for its own good. *What's New Pussycat?* ends as cosy fun. It could have been more.

J. H. FENWICK

THE COLLECTOR

THERE IS SOMETHING VERY COSY and comforting about William Wyler's films these days. Except for the stars and a couple of lines in the script, *The Loudest Whisper* could have been made in 1934 (which of course it was); and all disturbing advance suggestions that Wyler had gone New Wave with *The Collector* (BLC/Columbia) prove happily unfounded. There is, admittedly, a certain thinness about the narrative which might be attributed to modern notions of what constitutes a story and a proper way of telling it. More probably, however, this is the result of taking the central narrative line of John Fowles' novel—the story of a neurotically shy young man who, after winning a football pool, 'collects' the girl of his dreams like a butterfly—out of its context.

First it has been thinned out and shorn of all its quasi-symbolic social complexities, to be diversified instead with flashbacks and side-issues. Then, after being shot in this diluted version, it has been pared down to the original story again—hence no sign of Kenneth More, and of Mona Washbourne only one tiny scene. But what we are left with, though paper-thin, is perfectly clear and really rather grippingly told. There is perhaps no single scene as memorable as the heroine's night escape in Silvio Narizzano's quite closely comparable *Fanatic*. A number of incidental landscapes, however, are unusually pleasing; and the situation of a pretty girl alone in a house miles from anywhere with a maniac is milked for all it is worth on the level of melodrama. (Occasional tentative hints that something more is meant by it all can be quietly disregarded.)

The Collector is, of course, to a considerable extent an actors' film—how can something which is virtually a two-character piece be anything else? Since it happened to be the only film at Cannes this year which allowed any point to be made of the acting, it is hardly surprising that it was a hot contender for the major acting awards; though there can surely be little argument that in finally giving it both of them the jury exaggerated a bit. Samantha Eggart looks fine, but seems to find the snob social background attributed to her something of a burden (or is this the result of timid simplification for American audiences?). Terence Stamp, on the other hand, is physically rather surprising casting, since he looks self-evidently too glamorous to be the spotty, girl-shy, generally unattractive figure postulated by the plot. Otherwise he manages very well, his refined suburban accent in particular being a technical triumph. The only trouble is that one is throughout too conscious of the mechanics of the performance—as of the film—to be totally won over by it.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Elliott Stein

FUN in a Chinese Laundry



THE TITLE CHOSEN by von Sternberg for his autobiography* is that of an early Edison film. Not chronological, not a tractable biography, this long-awaited volume *is* not unlike a Chinese laundry—but one in which an American *femme de chambre* has helter-skeltered the Mandarin's fairly cleaned-up wash amongst a pile of shirts torn to bits in rage and strewn all over the place. Aficionados of private lives, love affairs, Dietrich fetishists abstain. Not much fun either; oft-thwarted talents can make for fancy ironising, but the games and gains are interior, labyrinthinising. The only real fun is in the coda, a wacky but accurate index, which does reflect the book's contorted, star-crossed ebb and flow. A few excerpts in sequence from this inadvertently surrealist prose poem will speak for themselves:

carnal, 91; Carné, Marcel, 44; cart before the horse, 270; . . . then: . . . ear wax extractors; Eisenstein, Sergei; emotional larceny; . . . Fleming, Victor; flummery; Foch, General; fool for femmes; France; Freud, Sigmund; . . . handshaking; harlot; Haver, Phyllis; Hazlitt, William; Hecht, Ben; Henry VIII; hinges of body; Hitchcock; Hitler; . . . Ibsen, Henrik; ideas, flogged; . . . *Last Year at Marienbad*; latrine duty; Laughton, Charles; . . . navel of Venus; Nazis; Negri, Pola; . . . self-abasement; Sennett, Mack; . . . West, Mae; Whistler, James A. McNeill; wife used as leading lady; wild track; wind machine; women barred from stage; wooden leg.

A Sternberg enthusiast of long standing, I had awaited the promise of this volume for years. It is the most interesting book by a major film figure in a long time. But even for an admirer, its throbbing and aggressively unabashed *amour-propre* disconcerts. Its long drawn-out pique is the bracket of a career assaulted by incomprehension, hindrances to self-expression, and the constellations of blockheads *jvs* had to suffer ungladly, simply in order to make any movies at all. *Hollywood and the 'Industry' versus the Men from Mars*: a tragic serial which already seems to have taken place in another century. Von Stroheim, Welles, Eisenstein's American experience, von Sternberg: those complete talents whose energies and exigences of self could never establish inter-planetary contact with the bankers and the front offices. It's an old story, and Hollywood is not its unique locale.

But even so, even so, the most pro-*jvs* pair of eyes may well conjunctify after chapter and chapter of: "A group of Chinese acting in a film of mine elevated me to godhood"; an actress from Prague, after seeing a Sternberg film, burst into tears and "followed me out into the wet street, knelt down and kissed my hand."—Probably not a cinema on the face of the earth has failed to show a *jvs* movie.—"My name is recorded in a compact synopsis of the history of the world from prehistoric time, published in Switzerland by a society of pedagogues."—"I've inspired songs . . . members of old nobility have run errands for me . . . I've been wined and dined by ambassadors of a dozen nations . . . and been the guest of royalty." (Who would have predicted that great chunks of the literary testament of the creator of *The Docks of New York* would read like the syndicated dowagerising of Elsa Maxwell?) . . . "I've been consulted by members of the British Parliament."—A letter from Mary Garden: "What a genius you are!"—Who was responsible for bringing Stiller and Garbo to Hollywood? One guess.—*Morocco* saved Paramount from bankruptcy; Sternberg saved Cary Grant from Mae West to make him a star.—Of William Powell, *jvs* made a star, who was so little pleased that he had a clause written into his later contracts that he would never be obliged to appear in another *jvs* opus.—Baclanova's "only superb performance in America" was in a film of *jvs*.—"Huszar-Puffy numbered himself among my most ardent admirers."—*The Last Command* was the favourite film of Masaryk, first president of Czechoslovakia.—At the height of his career, making films became secondary to Lubitsch: all of his energies were devoted to being jealous of and nasty to *jvs*.—A publicity-hungry actor,

**Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, by Josef von Sternberg. Illustrated. Macmillan, New York. \$6.95.

VON STERNBERG, MERLE OBERON AND CHARLES LAUGHTON ON THE SET OF THE NEVER COMPLETED "I, CLAUDIUS".



DIETRICH AND CESAR ROMERO, "THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN".

projected into great prominence by appearing in a Sternberg film, was acclaimed everywhere he went; when dropped by the director, immediately, crowds no longer cheered him whenever he alighted from trains.

Absolutely none of the above is necessarily untrue or exaggerated. But in bulk it does not digest well. Sympathy might be re-established by tracing the puffadderitis to its roots. Psychiatrists unfortunately often avoid admitting that some persecution complexes and feelings of grandeur may be the logical result of actual persecutions and justified feelings of grandeur. Not only was the man's style cramped by constant studio interference, and the bulk of his serious work naturally misunderstood by the hack, and alack, most influential daily American film critics, from whom not much else could have been expected. But, the straws that swelled the camel's back: film historians, presumably capable of non-deadlined, non-mass reader lucidity—these gentlemen proved even more impermeable and lacking in the minimum requirements for any approach to Sternbergland.

Lewis Jacobs in his "textbook classic" *Rise of the American Film*: "Peppered with lewdness . . . these films trace the gradual withering of a talent."

Richard Griffith, in his updated edition of Roth's *The Film Till Now* ("the film student's bible"): ". . . ludicrous and floridly vulgar . . . he gloats lovingly over scenes and incidents repugnant to the normal mind . . . trash dressed up as art."

In Bardèche and Brasillach's *Histoire du Cinéma* (the most consistently erroneous and doggedly fascistic compendium of nonsense on films in print): "There followed a succession of deplorable films, each stupider than the other, in which Marlene Dietrich . . . became a mere clothes-horse . . . the director losing his skill at film-making apparently forever."

We may not have come very far in the last decade, but writing on films seems to have moved a few steps away from these Dark Ages.

* * *

The writing in *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* is on a fairly high level, often very vivid:

The raised platform on which a bad actor gives tongue to a weak author become a witches' Sabbath of empty power, a Black Mass of drivel, collapsing when the lights go out, and non-contagious.

There are also amusing purplish passages which read like trailers for films that JVS never got around to making:

All of Bali was a stage, and the nights were full of young

foaming males in cataleptic contortions, each turning a razor-sharp kris against his glistening belly, or children with fingertips injured to fire holding glowing cinders to their unsinged eyelids while Rangda, the witch, cavorted to claim her victims in vain.

As might have been expected, Sternberg is not a great DeMille or Lubitsch fan, but he does admire the work of George Loane Tucker, Ince, Mack Sennett, Marco Ferreri, Pagnol (listed as a master craftsman!). Jean Benoit-Lévy is in, D. W. Griffith is out; Pommer is in (he gave JVS a free hand during production of *The Blue Angel*). Highest ratings of all go to Emile Chautard and Max Reinhardt. (Chautard, who started his career as one of Sarah Bernhardt's *jeunes premiers*, moved to Hollywood, where he made films and taught JVS the director's craft. After his retirement Sternberg brought him back as an actor, employing him in *Morocco* and *Shanghai Express*.)

The remarkable chapter on Jannings is alone worth the cost of the book. It had not been a secret that Jannings opposed the casting of Dietrich as Lola, nor that he was jealous of her during shooting. But one was hardly prepared for the scene in Jannings' dressing room recalled by Sternberg. After Jannings' manservant had fainted with emotion at the violence of the squabble, Jannings reproached the director with: "You were going to lunch with that Dietrich woman, weren't you . . . You prefer to eat with a female, rather than with me!" Sternberg was obliged to kiss Jannings full on the mouth in order to coax him out of his tantrum and back on set. And it was not common knowledge before this that when naming *The Blue Angel's* heroine, Sternberg had been inspired by Wedekind's *Lulu*. Nor that during shooting and even after seeing the completed version of the film which was to toss her into international stardom, Dietrich complained: "That what I was instructing her to do would make it impossible for her to show her face again . . . the film would ruin her forever."

* * *

In many ways, this book is the most thorough-going exposition of the *auteur* theory to appear anywhere to date, in or outside France: cinema is ideally director's cinema, a work of art cannot be a collective enterprise, it must be an individual act of creation, etc. (The author deplores that most directors not only don't edit, they don't even sit in on the editing of their films. He has edited all of his works, although some were tampered with by others after the fact.) The actor to JVS is a mere puppet, given life by the director, and discarded by him when he no longer needs him. The length of time during which an actor retains his popularity depends not on himself, but on his directors. The only actors who are not downright mountebanks are those who realise that they are nothing without the director's "inspiring substance." Actors become actors because of basic insecurity feelings—and crave applause insatiably to assuage this insecurity:

A child or a dog or a horse is made to act the same way as a great actor—as a matter of fact, with greater ease, as they do not resist so much.

Actors in films are dolls who only:

look as if they could move and speak by themselves. When a film actor who undergoes considerably more manipulation than any duck or dummy begins to appear to function, he is judged, even by the shrewdest critic, on the basis of being a self-determining unit of intelligence. This is not so . . . the more I ponder on the problems of the artist, the less they resemble the problems of the actor.

He even deplores that:

since the advent of sound, it is most unfortunate that actors' voices are reproduced correctly.

Since the film actor "cannot be responsible for his performance on the screen," JVS was amazed that someone as discerning as André Malraux, not realising that Dietrich's screen image was only that of a puppet, had acclaimed her—without mentioning the puppet-master who was pulling the strings and had created this mythical creature. Actors are insects, awaiting the director's orders to tell them which way to turn their feelers. Furthermore, they are masochists, and must be



"SHANGHAI EXPRESS". DIETRICH AND WARNER OLAND.

so, in order to submit to the twisting of their bodies and raiding of their brains by directors. According to Sternberg, Jannings was a masochist, Laughton was a masochist; on realising this JVS arranged for his assistants to kick Laughton through the door before each entrance of the actor on to the set of *I, Claudius*. (An additional stimulation, insisted upon by Laughton during the shooting of this unfinished film, was the playing of a recording of Edward VIII's abdication speech, on full volume, and before each take.) If *I, Claudius* had been finished, it might have been the most unique thesis film in the history of the cinema; for von Sternberg seems to have seen the emperor as a film star, launched to stardom by von Sternberg, and then dropped by him:

To show how a nobody can become a god, and become a nobody and nothing again, appealed to me.

Women are easier to direct than men because they are more predisposed to masochism:

It is the nature of a woman to be . . . capable of enduring pain . . . not normally outraged by being manipulated; no woman . . . has ever failed to enjoy this mortifying experience of being reorganised.

Thus Miss Dietrich, too, was a masochist, who:

. . . with commendable instinct turned herself into a martyr who praised the divine grace which favoured her with lacerations.

Actors who have worked with JVS subsequently spend millions of man hours vilifying him, but Dietrich has always taken great pains to extol him, claiming that she owed everything to him. The author, peculiarly indignant at this, interprets it as a gambit to provoke applause for her own modesty, which in turn results in additional abuse showered on him. Since, as voiced, her views are identical with his own (her screen image is his creation), one wonders *what* attitude could possibly satisfy him. The obsessive extent to which the actor-puppet theory is propounded leads one to suspect that it is at least to some extent a rationalisation of incidents in his private life which have wounded him and are absent from the book.

He concedes that his own behaviour might be considered

sadistic ". . . if it should be considered sadistic for a sculptor to chip his stone or pound his clay." But the vision which, with caressing vigilance, set the goddess in motion through the sublime textures of *The Scarlet Empress*, *Dishonoured* and *The Devil is a Woman*, is anything but sadistic. *Au contraire* . . . And in order to pigeonhole into this cosmogony-lexicon someone like Dietrich, whose very individual stature and intelligence have been apparent for well over thirty years, in their own rights, whatever the guiding source at the outset, new definitions of puppet and insect would be necessary.

Interlarded with the homilies on actors' non-existence, there is a valuable chapter sketching in the history of the performing arts, in which JVS views the actor as a tool, not only of his director, but of society. All of world theatre is a chronicle of the representation of emotions instinctively felt by the masses as too dangerous if repressed and not acted out. The highlight here is a bewitching description of a Chinese "house of multiple joys" named "The Great World", obviously a prefiguration of Mother Gin Sling's establishment in *The Shanghai Gesture*. We also get a withering section on crowd psychology, the mass mind (the public is stupid, the crowd is always stupid, JVS only seeks to please himself), and a suite of different types of spectacles which Sternberg has witnessed all over the world, including a graphic description of a pornographic show seen in Cuba. For him, the spell of cinema can never be intellectual. It is a carnal sensuous web woven by the director, in which dialogue, script and performers are mere technical instruments.

The penultimate chapter (much of which was first printed in *SIGHT AND SOUND*) is a rewarding and compact piece on film aesthetics, largely concerned with the importance of light and its proper handling in films. Elsewhere one does come upon a few morsels of biographical interest, such as the passages on his Viennese *fin-de-siècle* childhood, with the Prater as a traumatic image, reinforced by a later period in America when his father found work at Coney Island, the huge New York amusement area. Papa manipulated the levers controlling the water level for boats entering the Tunnel of Love. (Indeed, *The Devil is a Woman*, *The Scarlet Empress*, *Shanghai Gesture* often seem like monumental fun fairs, from which all the fun has drained.) There are also absolutely Dickensian passages when, as an impoverished youth, he worked for the father of a friend, inventor of a film-cleaning machine, who constantly and joyfully hurled the spools at his son, roaring with glee when he gashed the boy. Or Kamenetzky, for whom the child Jo Sternberg peddled trays of rhinestones from door to door—he became the inspiration for the

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT. "THE IMPORTANCE OF LIGHT".



cashier in *Shanghai Gesture*. Or Antcherly, his brutal Hebrew teacher, who terrified the pupils down to their bowels—he turns up in *The Blue Angel*.

It is also evident from Sternberg's reminiscences that Eisenstein was well acquainted with his work; which makes the relationship between the two masterpieces that are *The Scarlet Empress* and *Ivan the Terrible* less problematical. The director's so-called decline (he considers his last film, *Anatahan*—1953—to be his greatest work) has often been attributed to his extravagance, and the difficulties which this caused. He denies the charge, and prides himself on the cost of his first feature, *Salvation Hunters*, one of the cheapest films ever made (it returned that cost the first day it was released). On the contrary, he claims that his troubles in the Twenties, when he was demoted to assistant-directorship, resulted from fears which his work inspired in studio officials. If the bankers realised that a successful movie could be turned out on a shoestring, the executives' gilded existence would have been jeopardised. The officials thus conspired to demote him to a safe place down the ladder; and later, after the Dietrich successes, when the charges of extravagance were made, they were far from justified. If *Scarlet Empress* looks expensive, it is because of the lavish crowd scenes, which were nothing but inserts borrowed at no cost from Lubitsch's *The Patriot* and skilfully dissolved into the texture of Sternberg's film. Lubitsch, Paramount production head at that time, was too imperceptive to recognise his own footage: "And Mr. Lubitsch . . . charged me with wilful waste and disregard of costs, a charge that echoed and re-echoed, never to stop."

Why on earth didn't he pick up the phone and acquaint Lubitsch with the facts? Why, indeed, on earth, didn't Jvs pick up the phone when Chaplin, after enthusiastically selecting him to direct *The Seagull*, refused to release the film, which no one but Chaplin has ever seen?

We spent many idle hours with each other, before, during and after the making of this film, but not once was this work of mine discussed, nor have I ever broached the subject of its fate to him.

This is all very strange-sounding, and *The Seagull* affair is the big question which the book chooses to leave unanswered.

There are a few boners here and there (misdated Capra chronology, a nonsensical passage comparing the methods of artists and scientists, some erroneous information about music for silent films), but there is only one item to which pains and serious opposition must be made. It concerns Erich von Stroheim:

While a fellow director, active in the same studio with him, I was asked to re-edit his interminable *Wedding March*, which assignment I accepted, after obtaining his approval. He knew that I undertook this thankless task to be of service to him, as otherwise someone less qualified and with little sympathy for his work would have been told to shorten the film mercilessly.

Three pages later, "sympathy" for Stroheim's work consists of:

Gloria Swanson was queen of them all until she made *Queen Kelly*, which was so lamentable that it was never finished, though it finished both her and Erich von Stroheim, whom she had engaged to direct.

Jvs fails to mention that *Queen Kelly's* fate was initially compromised by the advent of sound, which altered the destiny of many a silent film. But in any case, calling it "lamentable" and *Wedding March* "interminable" gives a hollow sound to his professed sympathies for Stroheim's work, especially when one consults the other versions available on the *Wedding March* affair. Two close friends of von Stroheim, the film historian Georges Sadoul, and Lotte Eisner, *conservateur-en-chef* of the Cinémathèque Française, supply counter-evidence. Sadoul states that the work done by Jvs on *Wedding March* without Stroheim's agreement was condemned by Stroheim until his death. On being shown page 34 of Sternberg's book, Mme. Eisner shrieked: "*C'est ridicule!* Every time I saw the film, or what was left of it, with Stroheim, he was made sick by what had been done to it. All he could do was mutter over and over again: 'That son-of-a-bitch!'—meaning Joe, of course."

* * *

Reviewing such an amorphous, rewarding and infuriating volume is not an easy, and is in some ways an unnecessary labour, for the book will of course be of passionate interest to Sternberg fans. (Even they can expect a few jolts.) It certainly won't convert those not already bitten, who are rarely left unannoyed by his films because of their deeply personal, mysterious and provocative pleasures—of a texture so dense that they appeal at first to the eyes and fingertips, but on re-viewings stamp themselves into the mind as nearly abstract rewards. (Jvs's vision may actually be closer than anyone dreams to that of Bresson, the director in the world with whom at first glance he would seem to have least in common; but that would be the matter for another article.) Non-Sternbergians can only expect a source of further irritation in this book.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SOCIOLOGY OF FILM ART, by George A. Huaco. (Basic Books, London and New York, 30s.)

PROFESSOR HUACO'S BOOK is of a kind, it must be admitted, that sets up instant resistance. One suspects that it will prove, if not unreadable, at least the hardest of hard going. And in the introduction, sure enough, comes one of those uniquely jaw-breaking American sentences, when the Professor tells us that: "My macroscopic model is essentially a modified version of the original conflict model of Marx, using categories borrowed from the work of Neil J. Smelser." But the temptation to stop reading at this point should

be resisted. For the most part, Professor Huaco has his jargon under control; and in an unassuming way he has produced a book which tries to do something rather interesting.

His concern is with the three big, accessible and more or less self-contained phases of film history: German expressionism, Soviet 'expressive-realism' and Italian neo-realism. In each case, the object is to relate the films to a social and political context; to look, however cursorily, into the backgrounds of their makers (preponderance of painters among the German directors; of journalists among the Italians); and to see how and where the breakdown came that brought a particular movement to an end. Professor Huaco asserts that each school depended on four structural factors: "A cadre of film technicians, the required industrial plant, a favourable mode of organisation of the industry and a favourable political climate." Let one of these factors disappear (the German technicians went to America; the political climates shifted in Russia and Italy), and the movement will peter out.

So far, so good. But the problem, as with so much of this sort of writing on the cinema, is an impression of remoteness from the films themselves. Reasonably enough, Professor Huaco has to stress resemblances rather than the much more interesting points of difference. One would never guess from this book that De Sica's *Rome* and Visconti's *Acì Trezza* are mental worlds apart. Surely, though, he could have found some livelier method than to synthesise film plots (sometimes by way of quotation, which further increases the sense of remoteness) and add his summing up. *The Student of Prague* "implies that those who sell out to diabolical foreigners will be destroyed in the end"; *Warning Shadows* "suggests the familiar theme that sex and eroticism are destructive," and so on.

It is a pleasant change, however, to be told that the Soviet films had "a socially detached, ivory tower quality"—that their contact with the actual Soviet reality of the Twenties was very thin indeed. And the argument that German cinema "expressed a pro-capitalist, conservative ideology" is neatly expanded in the section on *Dr. Mabuse*. The old doctor, according to Erich Pommer, "was himself meant to portray the Spartacists (Communists). We would not have revealed this thirty years ago." But, says Professor Huaco: "This identification of the extreme left with the criminal underworld is the exact reverse of the actual political situation . . . It was the extreme right which joined with criminal elements in a systematic campaign of political assassination."

This is all useful, as is the statement of Italian unemployment statistics in the year *Bicycle Thieves* was produced; or the reminder of what Trotsky had to say about the arts ("The domain of art is not one in which the Party is called upon to command"); or the suggestion that "the presence of Nenni Socialists and Communists in the Italian government from 1945 to 1947 contributed to the political tolerance of . . . neo-realism"; or that Eisenstein's *October* had a clear relationship to a form of political 'mystery play' regularly enacted in the early Twenties by the people of Leningrad. Much of Professor Huaco's book is given over to a rather solemn demonstration of things often taken for granted. But it does bring together, in a compact form, a good deal of carefully documented information.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

FILM: THE CREATIVE PROCESS, by John Howard Lawson. Illustrated. (W. H. Allen, 42s.)

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON, an American screenwriter who has been blacklisted since he stood trial as one of the Hollywood Ten, and who wrote this book in Russia, makes his allegiances clear from the outset. "It is not an accidental error or unrelated to the film's craftsmanship," he writes of the racism in *Birth of a Nation*, "and it grows out of a social viewpoint that limited Griffith's art and was the main cause of his creative decline after the making of *Intolerance*."

The first half of the book is a historical survey tracing the importance of a valid social viewpoint. There is a glowing chapter on Chaplin; *Nanook* is eulogised as an expression of Flaherty's "faith in humanity"; the best films of the same period from Western Europe and Hollywood are described as having "no such faith", rather "a sort of negative intensity" that none the less "generated enough force to dominate cinematic art from that time to the present." In the last of seven short chapters on the same number of main movements originating in the Twenties (romantic pessimism; subjective fantasy emphasising aggression and violence; abstraction; naturalism; sex and the comedy of manners; the Western; the comic spirit) Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton are described as owing "a vast debt to Chaplin," but whereas he was able to "move toward an explicit challenge to the social order" they "stopped short of this tragicomic revelation." And so on (there are more page references for Chaplin than for anyone else mentioned) until one reaches the Russian masters with something of a relief. Here at least the thing that interests Mr. Lawson is the most interesting thing about the films. "The techniques of montage could be imitated," he concludes. "But film-makers could not duplicate the social experience—or the moral fervour—of Soviet artists." Neither, of course, could Soviet artists; as Mr. Lawson knows, the Revolution stopped providing the right kind of inspiration. Perhaps the most puzzling thing about this book is the feeling that its author has learnt the lessons of history, without allowing them to alter his point of view one jot.

Mr. Lawson's personal reminiscences of Hollywood, where he arrived in 1928 "as one of the first dramatists imported from New York to meet the need of dialogue," are entertainingly bizarre, if not quite personal enough. "The contradictory logic of Hollywood is demonstrated in my association with Cecil B. DeMille as the writer of his first talking picture, *Dynamite* . . . DeMille was an intelligent reactionary; he resembled Hearst in his total lack of moral sense and in his belief that one could sway the emotions of people by pretending to support their aspirations." But soon he's back on his survey, reassessing *Fury* (more favourably appraised in his *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting*) on account of its content and not because it isn't as brilliantly made as it first seemed, finding "an interesting contrast between the acid picture of a sick society in *La Règle du Jeu* and the warmth and depth of Soviet films of the same year."

On the language of films Mr. Lawson makes a lot more sense. In actual practice he usually knows what makes cinema work. When, for instance, he finds the film equivalent for the sentence "A man walks toward the mountains," his clarity is illuminating. Even his

argument for the use of verbal poetry in film scripts is persuasive; while his fascinating comparison of the opening scenes of Dickens' *Great Expectations* with David Lean's film version makes one wish, as he does, that more scripts had been available to him during the preparation of this book.

The theoretical section that follows contains a key sentence: "It would be attractively simple if we could make a symmetrical contrast between the negative aspects of cinema in the capitalist world and the positive achievements of socialist film." What makes Mr. Lawson's assessments of individual films so interesting is that he is generally too perceptive to take this easy course. He knows the language that Antonioni and Resnais are speaking; only he insists on drawing conclusions from their very inconclusiveness.

In the final section on structure he compares the time structure in films with the set of pictures of a man at different periods of his life which H. G. Wells' *Time Traveller* shows his friends in *The Time Machine*. "Something happens between each of the portraits," Mr. Lawson writes. "A relationship is created." In this respect *Citizen Kane* was, in his view, something of a breakthrough, particularly the opening scenes. But the film fails to develop as he would like: "We do not see Kane's life as a race against time, nor do we see him as an integral part, a significant manifestation, of the historic period in which he lived . . . In the last analysis, time has stood still for Kane. He has never gone beyond the childhood moment of bitterness when a prized possession was torn from his grasp." As a criticism of the film, this means as much, or as little, as the assertion that "the doubt of reality shadows the recent work of Resnais." Like preferring optimism to pessimism, which Mr. Lawson also does, it's as true as you think it is. The most interesting things about this book are its inferences, not its conclusions.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

CORRESPONDENCE

The Red Desert

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—I liked what Tom Milne had to say about *Une Femme Mariée*: all I'm waiting for now is a piece by him on the Brechtian ideas in Godard's films. What I didn't like was his ill-considered dragging in of *The Red Desert* and his superficial and irresponsible consideration of it.

Giuliana is, in my view, neither a case history nor a representative sample of the population of Ravenna—she is an abstract, purely poetic character chosen for the special purposes of a work of art. Her special nature is emphasised time and time again throughout the film: we see it through her eyes, and this creates a poetic conflict with reality.

Antonioni tells us what he thinks very subtly, for instance in the famous scene where a conversation between Ugo and Corrado is interrupted by a monstrous jet of steam, whose overwhelming power is emphasised in a series of distance shots. This has no other effect on the men than to change the subject of conversation: Ugo tells Corrado what is causing the phenomenon. By contrast, in another scene, Giuliana is repeatedly terrified by a miniature version of this jet of steam. The subject of the two men's conversation provides the vital clue to an understanding of the film, and to the nature of Giuliana's condition. The last words we hear from Corrado are proud—"My father built those silos"—and are followed by a lingering shot of the silos, reminding us that we must view progress in the light of human endeavour.

Giuliana's vision of a revolting beauty—the beauty of the mushroom cloud—is not Antonioni's. We are always conscious that if the light changes the colour will become natural, that if the lens is stopped up the picture will move into focus, that if Giuliana could understand and could adjust, all would be normal . . . Her vision of a hazy, silent, horrific intruder—a ship sailing across dry land, a plague hanging over the meeting place of friends—is not Antonioni's. His vision is contained in the sex symbols, symbols of growth, which subtly intrude into the texture, particularly when Giuliana is not around. The irony is that these sex symbols become reminders of Giuliana's spiritual rape.

Superficially the film is a view of progress seen through the eyes of a neurotic woman. But more than this it is an Antonionian, Marxist exposition of the nature of progress; of the impossible love affair between man and his creation (for as soon as we create something, we are separated from it); of the possible means of communication between man and his all-pervading environment; of the romantic tragedy (worthy of Pirandello at his best) of a beautiful

woman whom time has passed by, who cannot come to terms with her environment—and all because of an accident! This trigger mechanism acting on a responsive intelligent woman is all Antonioni needs to start a brilliant rhapsody on the split between technological progress and the slow evolution of social behaviour (not specifically morality). The paradox of Ravenna's achievement is expressed through a daring cinematic double-take, in which it is all seen through the eyes of a poetic creature drawn from the director's mind—the vessel through which the film flows. It is probably this double-take that has wakened the *Cahiers* group to Antonioni's greatness.

May I end by saying that Mr. Tobey's letter (SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer 1965) and Miss Dilys Powell's piece in the *Sunday Times* are the only good writings on the film in English. My view of the ships, expressed briefly above, is in no way intended to contradict Mr. Tobey's view. In any Antonioni image there is a richness of meaning which his disciples cannot imitate (as yet). The ships are both Giuliana's prison and her means of escape—they could take her away, but it is they who brought the plague. Faced with this dilemma, her only escape is madness.

Yours faithfully,
TIMOTHY HORROCKS
Leigh, Lancs.

It Happened Here

SIR,—Paul Rotha has asked me to make clear a statement, quoted in your last issue, in which I declared that his film *The Life of Adolf Hitler* had increased membership of the English National Socialist party by one third.

I was quoting the then organiser of the National Socialist party, who was appearing in the film I made with Andrew Mollo, *It Happened Here*; the point he was making was that you can be as vitriolic as you like on the soundtrack, but the moment you show original material of Nazi parades and rallies, the material is bound to have a stimulating effect on latent Fascists. The film he drew attention to was the Rotha production, which he said brought in many members, but he also referred to Erwin Leiser's *Mein Kampf*.

I remember one of our other actors—also a Nazi—telling me that he was somewhat upset after seeing *Mein Kampf*. "I knew the Germans had exterminated a lot of Jews," he told me. "But I didn't know they were that many..."

If such productions sow even the slightest seed of doubt in the mind of an extremist, they have done their job.

Yours faithfully,
KEVIN BROWNLOW
London, N.W.3.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WARNER-PATHE for *Inside Daisy Clover*, *Darling*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Modesty Blaise*.
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UNITED ARTISTS for *What's New, Pussycat?*
UNITED ARTISTS/ANTHONY HOWARD for *Help!*
M-G-M for *The Naked Spur*.
BLC/COLUMBIA for *Cat Ballou*, *Crime and Punishment*.
RANK FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *The Heroes of Telemark*, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, *El Cid*.
CONTEMPORARY FILMS/ACADEMY for *Joseph Kilian*.
BARGATE FILMS for *Yoyo*.
TOHO/BARGATE for *Throne of Blood*.
SOVEXPORT for *War and Peace*.
CZECH STATE FILM for *A Blonde in Love*.
GEORGES DE BEAUREGARD for *Pierrot le Fou*.
JUVENAL PRODUCTIONS for *Scruggs*.
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa*.
SPECTA FILMS-JOLLY FILMS/GILLES JACOB for *Playtime*.
CHAUMAINE PRODUCTIONS/FILMSTUDIO for *Alphaville*.
PALLADIUM PRODUCTIONS for *Gertrud*.
LES ARTISTES ASSOCIES/V.I.P. PRESS AGENCY for *Summer Fires*.
MAJESTIC/FRANCO LONDON for *E Venne un Uomo*.
R. D. BANSAL PRODUCTIONS for *Charulata*.
MERCHANT IVORY PRODUCTIONS for *Shakespeare Wallah*.
ARGOS FILMS for *La Brûlure de Mille Soleils*.
CHARLES HIGHAM for photograph of Universal Studios.
KEVIN BROWNLOW for photograph of former Vitagraph Studio.
FREDERIC FLEISHER for photograph of Ingmar Bergman.
THE DANISH FILM MUSEUM for *Mikaël*, *Master of the House*, *Once Upon a Time*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *I, Claudius*.

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THE FESTIVALS: VENICE

continued from page 185

up to little more than a reverential obeisance to the memory of Pope John. The trouble may lie partly in Rod Steiger, who acts as "mediator"—sometimes standing by as commentator and observer, sometimes gazing benignly at the little boy who represents the Pope as a child, sometimes standing in for him in the absence of actuality material. The camera turns repeatedly to Rod Steiger's face, and if this were a true Olmi film, one feels one ought to see reflected there something of the mystery of Pope John's extraordinary personality; as it is, all one sees is a conventional genuflection to piety. The real Olmi peeps out occasionally in the early sequences, photographed in beautiful story-book colours, which evoke the village landscape where Pope John grew up. The child, forced to return a pumpkin which he has stolen from the fields, looks on in solemn bewilderment as the owner stumps dourly in to dump four pumpkins on the family table; the young priest patters through the fields on an absurdly tiny pony beneath a large and brightly coloured umbrella; a horse has its mane decorated with gay rosettes, and its tail brushed long and lovingly in honour of a feast day.

The real sleeper of the festival, believe it or not, turned out to be the Korean comedy, *Samyong*, about a mute servant boy who falls in love with his aristocratic but unhappily-married mistress, and in the end dies for her. Photographed with real flair and sometimes considerable beauty, the film has a visual sophistication at odds with its rather naive story; and the mute's antics are handled with a gentle humour and touch of poetic fantasy reminiscent of the early Satyajit Ray. Kim Jinkyu, who plays the mute with infectious wild gusto, is obviously destined to be Korea's answer to Toshiro Mifune, in both appearance and talent.

* * *

More comedy, ultra-sophisticated this time, in Buñuel's *Simon del Desierto*. The target of his malice is not so much the saint who has been sitting on top of his pillar for six years, six weeks and six days ("Now, what else can I bless?" he asks himself, gazing round with serenely silly benevolence), as the priests who gather round like flies, annoyed because Simon's miracles upset their daily routine. The drums of *L'Age d'Or* roll again, and as one of his temptations Satan appears as a busty girl carrying a lamb and disguised in beard, wig and flowing white robe (guess Who?). At the end of the film, in one of his most stunning coups, Buñuel transports his saint into the modern world for a terrifying vision of humanity in the last stages of decay. Buñuel, in fact, has done it again.

One can't quite say the same for Kurosawa, whose *Akahige* is really a hospital soap opera, even though it beats Ben Casey and Dr. Kildare hollow at their own game and remains consistently enjoyable, mainly because Kurosawa never allows any slack, and never loses his sense of humour. Crossed in one of his efforts to do good, Toshiro Mifune as the dedicated hospital chief erupts into a wild samurai rage, knocks out a score or so of opponents, gazes round at the carnage of broken arms and legs, and ruefully tells himself, "I think I've gone too far." The reluctant young intern, who would much rather be a rich society doctor, answers an urgent call from a poor woman, then mutters in delighted surprise, "I'm doing good works." The film is studded, too, with moments of haunting weirdness, like the sequence in which women howl down a well to recall the spirit of a dying patient. This may not be vintage Kurosawa, but it is unmistakably his film.

Finally, Alan Schneider's *Film*, based on a script by Beckett and starring Buster Keaton. The subject is a variation on one of Beckett's favourite themes: a man locks himself up in a room, removes the witnesses to his existence (cat, dog, etc.), destroys the evidence of his past (photographs), and settles down to nothingness, only to be confronted by the final horror of his own image. Schneider's direction is perfectly Beckettian (and Boris Kaufman's camerawork superb), but oddly enough it is Buster Keaton who brings something new, and prevents the film from falling into the trap of *déjà vu*, *reductio ad absurdum* nihilism. Although Keaton is throughout photographed from behind until the final sequence, he cannot be reduced to a meaningless object: those slightly hunched shoulders and piston-like legs creeping along a blank wall *talk* expressively; the gesture turning away the cat's face, so that its eyes will no longer stare, is infinitely gentle; the hand which covers the mirror with a cloth, then pats it, is not proud of its accomplishment but almost apologetic. At last the modern cinema has found a role for Buster Keaton, humble enough but at least worthy of his talent: even when viewed almost exclusively from behind, Buster is still unmistakably Buster.

TOM MILNE

FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

AMOROUS ADVENTURES OF MOLL FLANDERS, THE (Paramount) The plain man's Tom Jones, and at times less tedious despite Kim Novak's genteelly bemused Moll, but director Terence Young mistimes his comedy scenes badly. (Richard Johnson, Angela Lansbury, Vittorio De Sica, Leo McKern. Technicolor, Panavision.)

***BONHEUR, LE** (Gala) Agnès Varda's view of happiness as a pastel-shaded summer afternoon stretching on and on. The photography (by Jean Rabier and Claude Beausoleil) describes pretty arabesques round what really amounts to a vacuum. (Jean-Claude Drouot, his wife and children, Marie-France Boyer. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

****CAT BALLOU** (BLC/Columbia) Spoof Western which is rather more than a parody—almost a ballad in lament for the ageing, creaking gun-fighter (Lee Marvin) coaxed by a pretty face (Jane Fonda) into trying to relive his own legend. Wholly endearing, in spite of halting moments. (Michael Callan, Nat King Cole, Stubby Kaye; director, Elliot Silverstein. Technicolor print.) Reviewed.

***COLLECTOR, THE** (BLC/Columbia) Young bank clerk entomologist starts trapping girls instead of butterflies, and installs his prisoner in specially constructed cellar. Tolerably tense little war of nerves, but directed and written without much edge. (Terence Stamp, Samantha Eggart; director, William Wyler. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

***DARLING . . .** (Warner-Pathé) John Schlesinger and Frederic Raphael take a dim view of the *dolce vita*, British style, while Dirk Bogarde contributes a performance that is moving enough to make all their polished misanthropy look rather pointless. (Julie Christie, Laurence Harvey, Roland Curram.) Reviewed.

*****DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID** (Fox) Jeanne Moreau takes over from Paulette Goddard, and Buñuel from Renoir, in this new version of Mirbeau's novel. The accent is very different—autumnal landscapes instead of summer gardens—but the result no less splendid. (Georges Gétet, Michel Piccoli, Daniel Ivernel.)

DINGAKA (Paramount) Simple-minded South African melodrama (with bursts of song and dance), in which the native hero's problem is not apartheid but a witch-doctor when, caught between tribal customs and white justice, he is tried for murder. (Ken Gampu, Stanley Baker; director, Jamie Uys. Technicolor.)

***EXECUTIONER, THE** (Contemporary) Black comedy about a young man persuaded for domestic reasons to accept a sinecure appointment as public executioner, then finding to his horror that he is called upon to officiate. Lovely visual gags wrapped up in much Spanish verbiage. (Nino Manfredi, José Isbert; director, Luis García Berlanga.)

GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD, THE (United Artists) George Stevens embalms the New Testament in a tasteful spectacular, magnificently set against backgrounds like Monument Valley, but otherwise so unimaginative that the only interest is in star-spotting among the eminent bit players. Max Von Sydow is an uninspiring Christ. (Charlton Heston, David McCallum, Dorothy McGuire. Technicolor, Ultra Panavision 70 presented in Cinerama.)

***GREAT RACE, THE** (Warner-Pathé) New York to Paris motor race, with upright Tony Curtis and conniving Jack Lemmon locked in rivalry all the way. Slapstick exuberant; décor appealing; Lemmon magnificently moustachioed. But there's almost three hours of it. (Natalie Wood, Keenan Wynn; director, Blake Edwards. Technicolor, Super-Panavision.)

HALLELUJAH TRAIL, THE (United Artists) Interminable joke about the various attempts to intercept a whisky wagon train on its way to fulfil a desperate need at Denver. Lethargically directed and dimly acted. (Burt Lancaster, Lee Remick, Donald Pleasence; director, John Sturges. Technicolor, Ultra Panavision presented in Cinerama.)

****HELP!** (United Artists) Comic strip fantasy, with the Beatles in flight from avenging Indians and a mad scientist. Frenetically active and as modish as they come; but also very genial and full of entrancing visual jokes. (Leo McKern, Eleanor Bron, Victor Spinetti; director, Richard Lester. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

***HOW TO MURDER YOUR WIFE** (United Artists) Strip-cartoonist Jack Lemmon (with Terry-Thomas as his Jeeves) inhabits the prettiest set for years, acting out each cartoon instalment before he draws it. But when an inadvertent marriage upsets this idyllic existence, George Axelrod's script begins to lose its invention. (Claire Trevor; director, Richard Quine. Technicolor, Panavision.)

INCREDIBLE MR. LIMPET!, THE (Warner-Pathé) Comic mixture of live action and animated cartoon showing how Henry Limpet, rejected by the Navy on medical grounds, does sterling wartime service as a short-sighted fish. (Don Knotts, Carole Cook, Jack Weston; director, Arthur Lubin. Technicolor.)

JOHN GOLDFARB, PLEASE COME HOME (Fox) Noisy slapstick about U.S. attempts to wheedle an air base out of a Middle Eastern potentate. Scripted and directed so ineptly that Shirley MacLaine makes a minimal impact and Peter Ustinov's comic talent fails to register. (Richard Crenna, Scott Brady; director, J. Lee Thompson. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)

LICENSED TO KILL (Golden Era) Effectively slick Bond parody, with allusions that even extend to Bond imitators like Napoleon Solo, and more corpses than can be kept track of. (Tom Adams, Karel Stepanek; director, Lindsay Shonteff. Eastman Colour.)

***LOVING COUPLES** (Gala) Taking over the Bergman mantle now that he's back on the ball, Mai Zetterling has concocted a gloomy anthology of Swedish sexual angst. It's all there, though rather confusedly, down to Sven Nykvist's impeccable photography and the panting soundtrack. (Harriet Andersson, Gunnel Lindblom, Gio Petré, Gunnar Björnstrand.)

MARY POPPINS (Disney) Sugar-coated musical which, despite the perfect poise of Julie Andrews, endows P. L. Travers's magical English nanny with the soul of mediocrity. (Dick Van Dyke, David Tomlinson, Glynis Johns; director, Robert Stevenson. Technicolor.)

***MIRAGE** (Rank) Old-fashioned thriller, featuring defenestration, loss of memory, and a trail of murders across New York. Opening really rather good, all impersonal office blocks and unexplained encounters; but a promising script (by Peter Stone, of *Charade*) peters out. (Gregory Peck, Diane Baker, Walter Matthau; director, Edward Dmytryk.)

MURDER AHOY (M-G-M) Strikingly soporific murder story, with Miss Marple, by now seemingly at the end of her tether, investigating crime on a cadet training ship. (Margaret Rutherford, Lionel Jeffries, Charles Tingwell; director, George Pollock.)

****MY FAIR LADY** (Warner-Pathé) Rex Harrison's definitive Higgins, and Audrey Hepburn's up-and-down Eliza, preserved for eternity in yards of décor by Beaton. Cukor's contribution is mainly to steer tactfully, and the Ascot tea-party is a treat. (Stanley Holloway, Wilfrid Hyde-White, Gladys Cooper. Technicolor, Super-Panavision 70.)

NAKED HOURS, THE (Compton-Cameo) Moravia story about a married woman's failure of communication with her husband and doomed love affair with a young student. Basically meretricious despite its many superficial obeisances to Antonioni. (Rossana Podesta, Keir Dullea, Philippe Leroy; director, Marco Vicario.)

*****OF A THOUSAND DELIGHTS** (Gala) Visconti's *Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa*, a modern re-working of the Electra story, which turns out to be not so much a tragedy as a love affair with the creaking mansions and crumbling countryside where his heroes suffer darkly. (Claudia Cardinale, Jean Sorel, Marie Bell, Michael Craig.)

OUTRAGE, THE (M-G-M) *Rashomon* in a Western setting only goes to prove that Martin Ritt is no Kurosawa, and that divorced from its medieval Japanese background the basic material is sadly cheap and tricky. Only the final episode, played for laughs, is mildly entertaining. (Paul Newman, Laurence Harvey, Claire Bloom. Panavision.)

*****PETER AND PAVLA** (Contemporary) Engagingly witty, quietly off-beat Czech comedy. Slow-witted Black Peter gazes at the scowling faces round him, cautiously discovering the shy gazelles lurking underneath who, fortunately, never behave quite as expected. (Ladislav Jakim, Pavla Martinková; director, Milos Forman.)

ROTTEN TO THE CORE (BLC/British Lion) The Boultings caper over familiar low-lying ground with comically incompetent crooks, an elaborately disastrous robbery plan, and remarkably few jokes. (Anton Rodgers, Eric Sykes, Ian Bannen, Kenneth Griffith. Panavision.)

SABOTEUR, CODE NAME "MORITURI", THE (Fox) Thumping wartime melodrama, in which German pacifist (Marlon Brando) is blackmailed by British Intelligence (Trevor Howard) into working for the Allies on board a German ship with a humane captain and only one Nazi in sight. (Yul Brynner, Janet Margolin; director, Bernhard Wicki.)

SANDPIPER, THE (M-G-M) Lushly silly romance, with Richard Burton as a minister falling in love with Elizabeth Taylor, an unmarried mother who poses in the nude for sculptor friends and throbs with Great Thoughts. The director, believe it or not, is Minnelli. (Eva Marie Saint. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

SECRET PARIS (Antony Balch) Jacopetti-style conglomeration of some of the odder practices that apparently take place in Paris, from gourmets eating bats to a girl student having the Eiffel Tower tattooed on her behind. (Director, Eduard Logereau. Eastman Colour.)

SOUND OF MUSIC, THE (Fox) Julie Andrews in the second of her all-conquering governess roles, as the convent novice who converts an Austrian naval captain and his family into a singing troupe. Almost intolerably wholesome. (Christopher Plummer, Eleanor Parker; director, Robert Wise. DeLuxe Color, Todd-AO.)

THIRD DAY, THE (Warner-Pathé) Far-fetched but moderately effective thriller about an amnesiac (George Peppard) who discovers (of course) that he may face a charge of murder. (Elizabeth Ashley, Roddy McDowall; director, Jack Smight. Technicolor, Panavision.)

THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES (Fox) Expensive slapstick about 1910 London-Paris air race, in which British insularity and ancient jokes triumph over an international cast. (Sarah Miles, Stuart Whitman, James Fox, Alberto Sordi, Jean-Pierre Cassel; director, Ken Annakin. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

*****TOKYO OLYMPIAD 1964** (BLC/British Lion) Gracefully glowing account of the Olympic pomp by a battery of loving cameras; even more agreeably, however, Ichikawa's irreverent eye favours the circumstance. (Eastman Colour, Scope.) Reviewed.

VISIT, THE (Fox) Culture run mad: or, Dürrenmatt's play systematically purged, injected with dashes of uplift and romance, saddled with a polyglot cast, and given the heaviest direction this side of De Sica's *Condemned of Altona*. (Ingrid Bergman, Anthony Quinn, Paolo Stoppa; director, Bernhard Wicki. CinemaScope.)

***WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?** (United Artists) Sellers and O'Toole as psychiatrist and patient, chasing and being chased by stripteasers, nymphomaniacs and lady parachutists. Disordered sex farce, which ought to be wildly funny and just isn't. (Romy Schneider, Paula Prentiss, Capucine; director, Clive Donner. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

***WITCHCRAFT** (Fox) Unpretentious, uncommonly gripping horror film about a witch (whose grave is disturbed by bulldozers) returning to torment the descendants of the family who caused her to be buried alive 300 years earlier. Often reminiscent of the Val Lewton films in its quiet, underplayed realism. (Jack Hedley, Jill Dixon, Marie Ney; director, Don Sharp.)

YOU MUST BE JOKING (BLC/Columbia) Passable romp in which Lionel Jeffries and Denholm Elliott are among the unlikely competitors in a forty-eight hour army initiative test. (Michael Callan, Terry-Thomas; director, Michael Winner.)

*****YOYO** (Bargate) Pierre Etaix's comedy about a sad millionaire who loves the circus and his son, Yoyo the clown. There's enough asstringency in Etaix to ward off any sentimental deluge, and some of his silent comedy gags are masterly. A very pretty film. (Luce Klein, Claudine Auger, Philippe Dionnet.) Reviewed.

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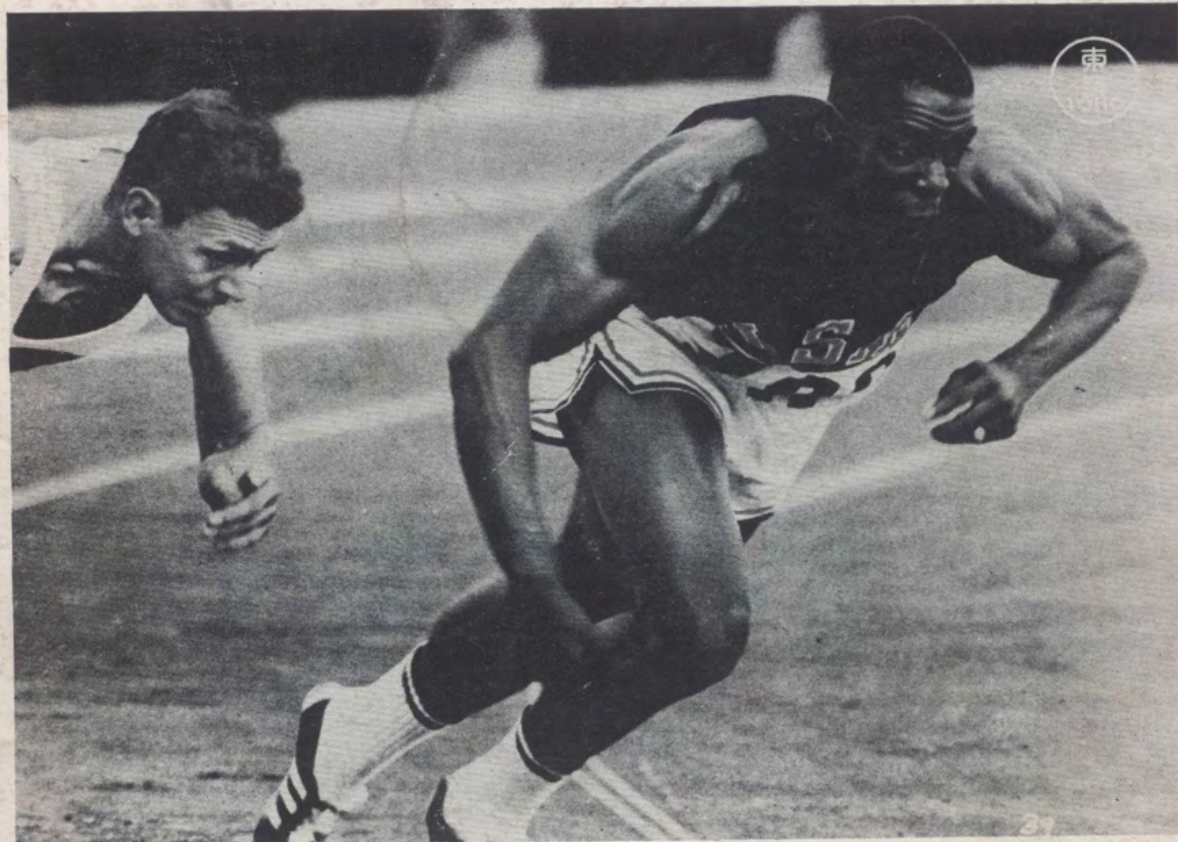
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